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The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges.

MICAH.

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MICAH,

WITH NOTES AND INTRODUCTION

BY

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PREFACE
BY THE GENERAL EDITOR.

THE General Editor of *The Cambridge Bible for Schools* thinks it right to say that he does not hold himself responsible either for the interpretation of particular passages which the Editors of the several Books have adopted, or for any opinion on points of doctrine that they may have expressed. In the New Testament more especially questions arise of the deepest theological import, on which the ablest and most conscientious interpreters have differed and always will differ. His aim has been in all such cases to leave each Contributor to the unfettered exercise of his own judgment, only taking care that mere controversy should as far as possible be avoided. He has contented himself chiefly with a careful revision of the notes, with pointing out omissions, with

suggesting occasionally a reconsideration of some question, or a fuller treatment of difficult passages, and the like.

Beyond this he has not attempted to interfere, feeling it better that each Commentary should have its own individual character, and being convinced that freshness and variety of treatment are more than a compensation for any lack of uniformity in the Series.

DEANERY, PETERBOROUGH.

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*** The Text adopted in this Edition is that of Dr Scrivener's *Cambridge Paragraph Bible*. A few variations from the ordinary Text, chiefly in the spelling of certain words, and in the use of italics, will be noticed. For the principles adopted by Dr Scrivener as regards the printing of the Text see his Introduction to the *Paragraph Bible*, published by the Cambridge University Press.

INTRODUCTION.

MICAH, also written Micaiah (Jer. xxvi. 18 *K'thibh*), was perhaps the youngest of that remarkable group of prophets who fill up the period from Uzziah to Hezekiah. He is called 'the Morasthite,' i. 1 (*i.e.* a native of Moresheth, a small town in the maritime plain near Gath[1], i. 14), to distinguish him from the Micaiah who lived in the reign of Ahab (1 Kings xxii.). His family would seem not to have been very important; otherwise his father's name would have been stated—as, for instance, Isaiah is described as "Isaiah, the son of Amoz." According to the heading, he prophesied "in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (i. 1), *i.e.* between 759 and 679 B.C. There is a difficulty, however, in accepting this date. We read in Jer. xxvi. 17, 18,

"Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of Israel, saying, Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, ..."

It is true, the passage quoted by the elders is Mic. iii. 12; so that there still might be a prophecy older than Hezekiah, if internal evidence suggested this. But internal evidence does not favour this view. Hezekiah was evidently already king when the prophecy against Samaria in chap. i. was written;

[1] The place was still known in the time of St Jerome, who says (*Prol. ad explanandum Michæam*); "Michæam de Morasthi qui usque hodie juxta Eleutheropolin (five Roman miles north of Gath) haud grandis est viculus."

and the argument used by some, 'the prophecy in Mic. iv. 1—3 is evidently more original than the form assumed by the same passage in Isai. ii. 2—4, therefore, since Isai. ii. was written probably under Ahaz, Mic. iv. cannot be later than the reign of Ahaz,' will not hold good, 1. because chap. iv. 1 is attached to chap. iii. 12, which was written (as Jeremiah shews) in the reign of Hezekiah, and 2. because chap. iv. 1—4 is not in the style of Micah, and was probably inserted here by Micah or another from some (perhaps older) prophet. It is better therefore to accept the statement of Jer. *l. c.* in its most literal sense, that "Micah prophesied in the days of Hezekiah." This at any rate applies to chaps. i.—iii., though it is perfectly possible that some parts of the later chapters (especially chaps. vi. vii.) may belong to a subsequent period. As to the heading, it has no binding authority; there is a similar inaccuracy in the heading of the prophecies of Isaiah. Here, as in the case of the headings of the Psalms, we are driven to assume that it was inserted by the scribes during the Babylonian Exile.

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE BOOK. Micah was not a literary artist, and we have no right to expect a careful and logical distribution of the contents. It is plausible to divide the book into three parts (viz. 1. chaps. i. ii.; 2. chaps. iii. iv. v.; 3. chaps. vi. vii.), each part beginning with 'Hear ye,' and each closing with a promise. And yet this division cannot have been originally intended. The abrupt transitions with which the book abounds prove that the Book of Micah, like most of the other prophetic writings, was mainly founded on discourses, or notes of discourses, composed on various occasions. With this reserve, however, we may accept another threefold division in preference to that above mentioned, viz. 1. chaps. i.—iii.; 2. chaps. iv. v.; 3. chaps. vi. vii. Threatening, or at least a gloomy view of things, predominates in the first and third; promise in the second.

STYLE AND SUBJECT. The prophecies of Micah are addressed to all Israel, but refer more particularly to Judah. He

was, like Amos, a native of a country district, and his rustic origin doubtless strengthened his recoil from the unnatural sins of the capital. He seems to have sprung from a deeply religious family; his name (Micah is a shortened form of Micaiah) means 'Who is like unto Jehovah?' Thus, like Isaiah, he was 'a sign and a portent in Israel from Jehovah' (Isai. viii. 18). Micah and Isaiah should in fact be read in connexion. "It pleased God," as Calvin remarks, "that a testimony should be borne by the mouth of two, and that holy Isaiah should be assisted by his friend, and as it were his colleague." But while they have much in common, they present the one truth in a slightly different light; Micah is even more emphatically an ethical teacher than Isaiah. He has no hope of any radical change for the better, and looks forward to nothing short of complete destruction for the city and the temple (iii. 12, see note). The later chapters, it is true, soften this prospect; but they were evidently written (if entirely the work of Micah) when the prophet had passed through some profound inner change. It was his prophecy of judgment through which he was remembered by the next generation (Jer. xxvi. 18); and in the unflinching severity of his tone he passes beyond even his great contemporary, Isaiah. In this predominant ethical tendency, Micah reminds us very much of Amos; but in his softer moods (for he has such) he suggests a comparison with Hosea. He would willingly strip himself like a captive, and cry as an ostrich for the calamity of Beth-aphrah (i. 10); he unites himself in spirit with the besieged Zion of the near future (v. 1). He compensates himself, moreover, for the enforced preponderance of threatening by a conclusion which is one of the sweetest passages of prophetic writing (vii. 8—20). Nor is it, perhaps, accidental that he lays such stress on "kindness" as one of the three elements of true religion (vi. 8). For human kindness is the reflection of divine; and the Jehovah whom Micah preaches is no capricious despot—he has entered into a moral relation to His people, Israel.

Still, for the purpose of historical illustration, no prophet is so important as Isaiah, on account of the abundance and fulness of

his writings; and it is worth while to compare not only the prophecies which he wrote under Hezekiah, but also those of the reign of Ahaz; for Micah may be presumed to have been a reader of Isaiah's prophecies, as soon as any of them were collected. Compare, then, the following more or less close coincidences:—

Micah i. 9—16	with	Isai. x. 28—32	
— ii. 1, 2	.....	—	v. 8
— ii. 6, 11	.....	—	xxviii. 10 xxx. 10, 11
— ii. 11	.....	—	xxviii. 7
— ii. 12 iv. 7	.....	—	x. 20—23
— iii. 5—7	.....	—	xxix. 9—12
— iii. 12	.....	—	xxxii. 14
— iv. 4 (end)	.....	—	i. 20 (end)
— iv. 10	.....	—	xxxii. 11
— v. 2—4	.....	—	vii. 14 (?)
— v. 5	.....	—	ix. 6
— v. 9—14	.....	—	ii. 6—17
— vi. 6—8	.....	—	i. 11—17
— vii. 7	.....	—	viii. 17
— vii. 12	.....	—	xi. 11.

The following are the chief predictions in the Book of Micah. 1. The destruction of the kingdom of Israel, and especially of its capital Samaria (i. 6, 7). 2. The complete destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (iii. 12, vii. 13). 3. The deportation of the Jews to Babylon (iv. 10). 4. The return from exile; peace and prosperity in Canaan; victories and spiritual primacy of Israel (iv. 1—8, 13, vii. 11, 14—17). 5. A ruler in Zion (iv. 8), born at Bethlehem, of the family of David (v. 2). According to Delitzsch, some of these prophetic intuitions indicate that Micah saw even further than Isaiah, inasmuch as—

(1) he predicts not only the Babylonian exile, but also the deliverance from it;

(2) he considers Babylon as the metropolis of the world, as the centre of the land of Nimrod (v. 5), the enemy of Israel (vii. 8, 10), though it is true that in v. 4 he calls the hostile world-empire by the current historical name Assyria; and

(3) while Isaiah beholds the rise of Messiah's kingdom in connexion with the fall of Assyria, Micah sees the kingdom of the Messiah established after the Babylonian exile[1].

Upon the whole, as we have seen, it was the troublesome office of Micah to warn his countrymen of judgment. A pungent irony stood at his command; and he was not slow to avail himself of it. He abounds, too, in paronomasias and in bold interrogations, such as we can well imagine a fervid Hebrew orator employing. He unites simplicity, vividness, and energy. "Thus in predicting punishment, he uses the form of command, bidding them, as it were, execute it on themselves [ii. 10, i. 11, 13, iv. 10]" (Dr Pusey). "The rhythm is full and forcible, but not so smooth or rounded as that of Joel and Amos. The parallelism is usually regular; the diction pure and classical, but concise, and therefore difficult here and there" (Dr S. Davidson). We must, however, allow for the possibility that the text has at certain points been incorrectly transcribed. Providence has not interfered to preserve the Scriptures from the ordinary errors of scribes and editors.

Social, religious, and political state of Judah. As the commentary on chaps. ii. iii. will shew, the peasantry of Judah (the class to which Micah not improbably belonged, or with which at any rate he was best acquainted) were ground down by numerous exactions, and illegal, oppressive treatment on the part of the grandees. Commerce had increased the wealth of a few, and made the old law of land-tenure more and more difficult to maintain. The local sanctuaries still existed (Mic. i. 5); Hezekiah's reform was probably not as complete as we should infer from 2 Kings xviii. 4. The religious state of Judah, then, was by no means such as Micah could approve of; nor was its political state free from danger. How, in fact, could a nation prosper, when the ruling class set the laws of morality itself at defiance? Hence, although Hezekiah was 'one of the most splendid princes who ever adorned the throne of David,' and 'the last king who not only reigned in the spirit of the true

[1] Delitzsch, *Messianic Prophecies*, by Curtiss, § 44.

religion, but also reigned prosperously till his death' (Ewald), the clear-sighted prophet Micah warned his people of a judgment more severe than even Isaiah in general announced. But how are we to explain chaps. vi. and vii.? Are we not transported into another period? Such is the impression of Ewald. "We feel here," he says, "the effects of the cold, biting wind which King Manasseh brought over the kingdom of Judah; it is also plain from vi. 16 that the idolatrous tendency which this king favoured had long been prevailing; and the more religious hardly ventured, according to vi. 9*b*, to name the king quite openly." Certainly it is difficult to account for the tone of these chapters from what we are told in the historical books of the reign of Hezekiah; and the theory of Ewald, whether we adopt it or not, may serve to call our attention to the very real change of tone and circumstances in the two last chapters of the book. It will be remembered that there is a somewhat similar difficulty in accounting for the internal phenomena of Isai. xl.—lxvi.

CHRONOLOGY. The chronology of the kings of Israel is too intricate a subject to be treated of here. It is safest to follow the contemporary records of the Assyrians whenever a definite indication of date is given. The following dates differ somewhat from the chronology of Usher, but there is no justification for adhering to an antiquated opinion, when a more critical view is attainable.

B. C.	
727	Accession of Shalmaneser.
722	———— Sargon, and capture of Samaria.
715	Hezekiah (Wellhausen and Kamphausen).
705	Accession of Sennacherib.
701	Sennacherib's invasion of Judah.
686	(W. and K.) Accession of Manasseh.

The invasion of Sargon referred to on p. 17, is not mentioned in the Old Testament narratives in their present form; but there is reason to think that there is a confusion in 2 Kings xviii. 13 (=Isa. xxxvi. 1) between Sargon and Sennacherib, and that the later Jews had forgotten Sargon almost entirely, just as they forgot Assurbanipal. Certainly Sargon himself

claims to have 'subdued the land of Judah whose situation is remote,' (so Sayce, Nowack, and formerly Schrader), and it is possible that Sargon invaded Judah to punish Hezekiah for joining the same coalition of which Yavan, the unfortunate king of Ashdod, was a member (see Smith's *Assyria* in S. P. C. K.'s *Ancient History from the Monuments*, pp. 104, 5). If we might accept this as a proved fact it would illustrate not only the first chapter of Micah but several prophecies of Isaiah (viz. x. 5—xii. 6, xiv. 24—27, and probably chap. xxii.). The fate of Ashdod (Isai. xx. 1) seemed likely to be shared by Jerusalem; and the prophets bent all their energies to move the people to a timely repentance.

It seems scarcely fair however to the young student to place this supposed invasion of Judah by Sargon too prominently in a text-book. Prof. Sayce indeed remains unconvinced by the adverse criticisms directed against his theory, for he maintains it with undiminished confidence in his recent contribution to an educational series, called *The Times of Isaiah, Illustrated from the Monuments* (R. T. S., 1889). Prof. Robertson Smith (*The Prophets of Israel*, 1882, p. 206, &c.) may have given too positive a contradiction to the theory, but the fact that it was once held by so cautious a scholar as Schrader shews that it cannot be in itself violently improbable. The present writer said in 1884 that he would 'agree to leave it an open question whether Sargon really invaded Judah or not, provided it be admitted that there is at least some evidence for it, and that to accept the view casts a bright light on some very important prophecies' (*The Prophecies of Isaiah*, ed. 3, vol. ii. p. 185). Delitzsch in his 4th edition (1889) mentions but does not accept the invasion of Sargon; so too decidedly Driver (*Isaiah, his Life and Times*, 1888, pp. 101, 102). Tiele (*Bab.-ass. Gesch.*, 1886) thinks that where Sargon claims to have subdued 'Judah', it is a scribe's error for 'Israel'. But is not this quite unnecessary? The hypothesis of an invasion of Judah is in itself probable (see Schrader, *Stud. u. Krit.* 1876, p. 738). The Annals of Sargon, if they had been exhaustive, might have contained a reference to such an event, if it really occurred. But we want more evidence.

MICAH.

CHAP. I. 1. *Heading.*

THE word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite 1
in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of
Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

2—7. *The Threat of Punishment.*

Hear, all ye people; 2
Hearken, O earth, and all that therein is:

CHAP. I.

The judgment upon Samaria and the land of Judah; and the prophet's lament. The historical fulfilment of the prophecy is in the capture of Samaria by Sargon in 722, but one must hardly add his (very doubtful) invasion of Judah in 711. Compare the topographical allusions in i. 10—15 with the corresponding section in Isai. x. 28—32.

1. HEADING (see Introduction).

1. *Micah the Morasthite*] i.e. Micah of Moresheth-gath (see *v.* 14).

which he saw] To 'see' is a very early and very natural synonym for 'to prophesy;' 'he that is now (called) a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer' (1 Sam. ix. 9). Hence the prophecies of Isaiah are called a 'vision' (Isai. i. 1; comp. Nah. i. 1, Obad. i. 1). Another figure for prophecy is 'hearing' (see Isai. xxi. 10, xxviii. 22). The meaning is that the prophet has an inward perception of certain facts through the influence of the Divine Spirit (Zech. vii. 12).

2—7. THE THREAT OF PUNISHMENT.

2. *all ye people*] Rather **peoples.** God's judgment upon the world is now in progress (comp. Isai. iii. 13, 14, xxxiv. 1—5), and one of the principal acts in the great drama is the judgment impending over Israel. Hence all nations are summoned, not merely as legal witnesses (as when 'heaven and earth' are called upon in a figure in Deut. iv. 26, xxx. 19, xxxi. 28, Isai. i. 2), but that they may learn wisdom in time from Israel's fate. Hence the next half of the verse continues, '...against *you*.' The opening words of this verse are uttered by Micaiah in 1 Kings xxii. 28, which can hardly be an accidental coincidence, as Micah is a

And let the Lord GOD be witness against you,
The Lord from his holy temple.
3 For behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place,
And will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth.
4 And the mountains shall be molten under him,
And the valleys shall be cleft,
As wax before the fire,
And as the waters *that are* poured down a steep place.
5 For the transgression of Jacob *is* all this,
And for the sins of the house of Israel.
What *is* the transgression of Jacob? *is it* not Samaria?
And what *are* the high places of Judah? *are they* not Jerusalem?

shortened form of Micaiah. Probably the words in 1 Kings were interpolated by some ill-advised scribe, who identified Micaiah with our prophet Micah.

the Lord God] Rather, **the Lord Jehovah.** This is the reading of the Hebrew text; A.V. follows the vowel-points, which in this case merely express the exaggerated reverence of the later Jews for the sacred name.

his holy temple] It is 'the temple of heaven' which is meant (Rev. xvi. 17). Comp. Hab. ii. 20, Zech. ii. 13, Isai. lxiii. 15, Ps. xi. 4.

3. *cometh forth out of his place*] Two persons may use the same expressions in very different senses. Heathen poets imagined that divine beings 'came forth' and mingled in the strife of mortals; the prophets adopt the same language as the symbol of the working of a spiritual Deity.

4. *the mountains shall be molten...*] The figure is that of a storm, but no ordinary storm. Lightning descends, and dissolves the very mountains, and torrents of rain scoop out channels in the valleys. Similar symbolic descriptions occur in Judg. v. 5, Isai. lxiv. 1, Hab. iii. 6; comp. Ex. xix. 18.

5. The cause of this awful manifestation—the sin of Samaria and Jerusalem.

Jacob] A poetic synonym for Israel. The term has a slightly different meaning in the two halves of the verse. In the first, it clearly means the whole of the chosen people, including Judah; but in the second, only the Ten Tribes, sometimes called 'Ephraim' (e.g. Isai. vii. 5), but oftener (in the historical books) 'Israel.'

What is the transgression] From what does it proceed? In what is it summed up? 'Transgression' is a weak rendering; **apostasy** would be nearer the Hebrew.

what are the high places of Judah?] In order to make sense, it is necessary to assume that the term 'high places' is here synonymous

Therefore I will make Samaria as a heap of the field, 6
And as plantings of a vineyard:
And I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley,
And I will discover the foundations thereof.
And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to 7
pieces,
And all the hires thereof shall be burnt with the fire,
And all the idols thereof will I lay desolate:
For she gathered *it* of the hire of a harlot,
And they shall return to the hire of a harlot.

with 'apostasy' in the parallel line. But have we a right to make this assumption, for which there is no analogy in Hebrew? Our present text rests on such imperfect authority, that it is more reasonable to suppose here a corruption in the reading, and to follow the three most ancient versions (the Septuagint, the Peshito, and the Targum), which presuppose the reading 'What is *the sin* of Judah?' This is also more in harmony with what we know of the prophets of this period, who do not elsewhere so emphatically denounce the 'high places,' or shrines scattered up and down the country (comp. on v. 14). They were more concerned with principles than with the detailed application of them. Some abominations were too obvious to be passed over; other evils, less distinctly seen as evils, were tolerated, or only gently protested against. Perhaps 'high places' in this passage was originally a marginal note in an early manuscript, intended to explain in what the sin of Judah consisted.

6. *as a heap*] Rather, **into a heap** (i.e. into ruins).

as plantings of a vineyard] Rather, **into the plantings**, &c. Samaria should remain so long in ruins, that vineyards should be laid out upon it (comp. Isai. xxviii. 1 'the fat valley of those who are smitten down with wine'). Schrader quotes a parallel Assyrian phrase.

I will pour down the stones] Samaria standing on a hill (see 1 Kings xvi. 24). "There is every appearance of the ancient buildings having been destroyed, and their materials cast down from the brow of the hill, in order to clear the ground for cultivation; masses of stone are thus seen hanging on the steep sides of the hill, accidentally stopped in the progress of their descent by the rude dykes and terraces separating the fields." "The materials of the ruins...are piled up in large heaps, or used in the construction of rude stone fences; many of these heaps of stone are seen in the plains at the foot of the hill." *Journal of a Deputation sent to the East by the Malta Prot. College*, Vol. II. p. 425.

discover] i.e. lay bare.

7. *the hires*] i.e. the rich votive offerings in the sanctuaries, shortly afterwards called 'the hire of a harlot,' with reference to the shameful practices of heathenish religion (Deut. xxiii. 17, 18).

shall return] i.e. shall again become (as Gen. iii. 19 'unto dust shalt thou return'). The material of the costly images acquired through the

8—16. *Micah's Lamentation.*

8 Therefore I will wail and howl,
I will go stript and naked:
I will make a wailing like the dragons,
And mourning as the owls.
9 For her wound *is* incurable;
For it is come unto Judah;
He is come unto the gate of my people, *even* to Jerusalem.

offerings of devotees shall again be used for votive offerings in other no less shameful religions, based, like those of heathen Syria, on the worship of the powers and processes of nature.

8—16. Micah's Lamentation.

8. *Therefore I will wail*] Such exuberance of emotion specially characterizes the Jews and the Arabs; it reminds us of the Homeric heroes. The prophets did not cease to be men when they received the gift of inspiration. Sometimes they seem to have had a kind of double consciousness, uniting them on the one hand with the inspiring Spirit, and on the other with their much-loved people. Hence their abrupt transitions from stern denunciation to tender compassion.

stript and naked] i.e. without an outer garment; comp. 1 Sam. xix. 24, Amos ii. 16, John xxi. 7. It seems to be a single symbolic act which is referred to (comp. Isai. xx. 2). The word 'stripped' indicates that the appearance of the prophet is significant of the enforced nakedness of his people on their way to captivity (Isai. xx. 3, 4).

dragons...owls] Rather, **jackals...ostriches** (comp. Job xxx. 29). The Hebrew poets are fond of likening the note of lamentation to those of animals. In Isaiah the swift, the crane, the dove, and the bear are referred to (Isai. xxxviii. 14, lix. 11); while here it is the 'long, piteous cry' of the jackal, and the 'fearful screech' of the ostrich which furnish the object of comparison.

9. *her wound*] Lit. **her stripes.** Samaria's trouble is a chastisement (comp. Isai. i. 3, 4), but it is not Samaria's trouble only. It has reached Jerusalem; hence the 'incurableness' of the 'wound,' for Jerusalem is the heart of the nation. The past tenses vividly express the certainty of the prophet's intuition of the future.

he is come] Or, **it is come.** The subject may be either the 'stripe' or the dealer of the stripe—Jehovah.

the gate of my people] Jerusalem is to the chosen people in general what the gate is to the city itself. The shady space in the city gate was the favourite place of meeting; so Jerusalem is the scene of 'our solemn meetings' (Isai. xxxiii. 20), our religious and political centre.

10. *Declare ye it not...*] 'May we at least be spared the sight of the malicious joy of our envious neighbours!' Here begins a series of paronomasias, which however are far from indicating a playful mood in the prophet. Most of them refer to Judæan towns in the prophet's own

Declare ye *it* not at Gath, weep ye not at all:
In the house of Aphrah roll thyself *in* the dust.
Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having *thy* shame naked:
The inhabitant of Zaanan came not forth *in* the mourning of Beth-ezel;
He shall receive of you his standing.

neighbourhood. He could not possibly jest about the fate of his friends! No; he is in sober earnest, and sees (like Isaiah in Isai. x. 30) a pre-ordained correspondence between names and fortunes (comp. the familiar phrase 'his name shall be called'='he shall be'). It is not always easy to catch his allusions, nor to reproduce them when caught. Some idea of the general effect is given by M. Reuss in the following imitation, 'N'allez pas le dire à Dijon! N'allez pas pleurer à Plœrmel! Pars, Paris! Chartres, attèle ton char!'

at Gath] Alluding to 2 Sam. i. 20. The substance of the power of Gath had passed away (Amos vi. 2). Like Ashdod (see Amos i. 8), it seems not to have recovered from the severe blow inflicted by Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 6). But its name was still a symbol of bitter hostility.

weep ye not at all] Or, **in Acco weep ye not** (another reading). According to Judg. i. 31, the Canaanites were not driven out of Acco. Thus Acco (the later Ptolemais) would be the representative of the Canaanites or Phœnicians of the north. The choice of the town would be dictated (as the Hebrew suggests) by the love of paronomasia. The Sept. has οἱ Ἐνακείμ; but we should probably read οἱ ἐν Ἀκή (μ came from the following μή; and η and ει are often confounded).

in the house of Aphrah] Rather, **in Beth-le-aphrah** (i.e. House of dust). There was a town of the tribe of Benjamin called Ophrah, Josh. xviii. 23. Most, if not all, however, of the other eight towns appear to lie in the Shephélah, i.e. the 'low country' between Joppa and Gaza; probably therefore the Benjamite Ophrah is not here intended. It may be asked, Why does the prophet single out the Shephélah? Isaiah, in a strictly parallel passage (x. 28—32), mentions an altogether different region as suffering from the invasion. The answer is, that the prophet has the feelings (if we may say so) of a provincial. The 'low country' was even less able than Aiath, Migron, Michmash, &c., to oppose the rapid movements of the Assyrians.

roll thyself in] Rather, **besprinkle thyself with.** So Tamar, as a sign of mourning, 'put ashes upon her head,' 2 Sam. xiii. 19. But the reading of the Hebrew text is preferable to that of the margin and of A.V., viz. 'I have besprinkled myself with.'

11. *inhabitant*] The word in the Hebrew is feminine, the population of the city being (as often, e.g. Isai. i. 8) personified as a virgin.

Saphir] as if Fair-town (a play on the name).

Zaanan] The Zenan of Josh. xv. 37.

came not forth, &c.] Rather, **is not come forth; the mourning of Beth-ezel taketh from you its standing-ground.** Zaanan would

12 For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good:
But evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem.
13 O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the swift beast: הָרֶכֶשׁ לָרַכֶּשׁ
She *is* the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion:
For the transgressions of Israel were found in thee.
14 Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moresheth-gath:

willingly come forth from her walls and flee, but the mourning at Bethezel (which might mean 'the house, or place, at one's side') fills her with despair. An 'Azal,' or rather Azel, is mentioned in Jerusalem in Zech. xiv. 5 (see however on 'Aphrah,' *v.* 10).

12. *Maroth*] The name might mean Bitternesses, i.e. 'perfect grief.' Comp. Ruth i. 20, 'Call me Mara, for the LORD hath made it bitter unto me,' i.e. hath grieved me.

waited carefully] Rather, **hath been in pain.** חָלָה

for good] i.e. for the good of liberty which it has lost.

but evil came down] Rather, **for evil is come down.**

unto the gate of Jerusalem] It is the 'great gate' spoken of thus by Sennacherib in his boastful inscription, 'the exit of the great gate of his city I caused (them) to break through' (Taylor's cylinder, col. iii. lines 22, 23). Sargon, however, is probably the Assyrian king referred to by the prophet, as also by Isaiah in a parallel passage (xxii. 7), "the horsemen [of the enemy] set themselves in array towards the gate" (this is the correct rendering).

13. *Lachish*] That well-known fortified town in the Shephélah, or maritime plain, the capture of which was commemorated by Sennacherib in two bas-reliefs in his palace; comp. Isai. xxxvi. 2, xxxvii. 8. These small Syrian and Palestinian fortresses had to sustain repeated sieges. 'Lachish' and *rechesh* ('swift beast') make what is called an assonance; hence the mention of Lachish suggests the thought of harnessing the chariot for flight. The imperative is of course to be understood poetically. It would be well for Lachish if her 'swift steeds' could carry her far away—those 'swift steeds' which were so violently obnoxious to Micah and his fellow-prophets (Isai. ii. 7, xxxi. 1).

she is the beginning of the sin] Rather, **it was the beginning of sin...that,** &c., i.e. the idolatry of the northern kingdom took root first of all in Lachish, and from thence spread over the rest of Judah (comp. vi. 16). It is remarkable that the infection of idolatry should have appeared at a bound so far from its original focus. No light can be thrown upon this.

14. *Therefore*] There is no logical sequence implied: 'therefore often introduces a threatening passage—sin leading to punishment. The prophet abruptly turns to the people of Judah.

shalt thou give presents, &c.] More strictly, **farewell-presents.** The meaning of the whole clause is that Judah will have to give up Moresheth-gath. True, it was to an enemy that this town was to be

עַל־כֵּן תִּתְּנִי

The houses of Achzib *shall be* a lie to the kings of Israel.
Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of 15
Mareshah:
He shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel.
Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children; 16
Enlarge thy baldness as the eagle;
For they are gone into captivity from thee.

surrendered, and 'farewell presents' seems to have been a technical term for the marriage-portion of a bride (so 1 Kings ix. 16). But a loose use of the phrase is quite intelligible; the literal meaning is simply 'dismissal.'

Moresheth-gath] The birth-place of the prophet (see Introduction), who here makes an allusion to its meaning—'possession of Gath.'

Achzib] Mentioned as in the Shephélah, Josh. xv. 44. Its name suggests the thought of deception or disappointment; hence the following words. It is probably the same as Chezib, and, remarkably enough, the passage where Chezib is mentioned contains a similar reference to the ominous purport of the name. 'He (Judah) was at Chezib,' we read in Gen. xxxviii. 5, 'when she (Tamar) bare him.' It was an appropriate birthplace for Shelah, who afterwards disappointed the just expectations of Tamar in regard to Judah.

a lie] Rather, **a disappointing brook**. The word for 'brook' is omitted as in Jer. xv. 18, where the parallel clause explains the phrase to mean 'waters that fail.'

the kings of Israel] 'Israel,' after the fall of the northern kingdom (predicted in *vv.* 6, 7) is legitimately applied to Judah.

15. *Yet will I bring*, &c.] Rather, **Moreover unto thee will I bring him that shall possess thee** (viz. Sargon and his Assyrians). 'Mareshah' was near Achzib (Josh. xv. 44). There is an allusion to its possible meaning of 'possession.'

he shall come unto Adullam, &c.] Rather, **the glory of Israel shall come even unto Adullam.** The nobility of Israel are to take refuge in the cave which once harboured David and his band (1 Sam. xxii. 1, 2). These limestone caverns are of great extent; some of them, says Dr Pusey, will hold thousands of men. A second meaning may be implied by a paronomasia, 'The glory of Israel shall set for ever' (as if Adullam meant 'for ever,' Hebr. *ad olam*). Adullam was a fortified town in the Shephélah, Josh. xv. 35.

16. *Make thee bald*] The prophet addresses the sorrowing mother, Judah, who sees her children go forth into exile. The injunction is to be understood poetically (see on *v.* 13). Artificial baldness, as a sign of mourning, was against the Law (Lev. xix. 27, 28, Deut. xiv. 1), but this prohibition was apparently not recognized in the Shephélah. Micah speaks in the character of a man of the Shephélah.

as the eagle] The word for 'eagle' (*nesher*) seems, in common discourse, to have included the vulture (so also ἀετός, Matt. xxiv. 28), which is common in Egypt and Palestine.

CHAP. II. 1—5. *Sin and its corresponding Punishment.*

2 Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon
their beds!
When the morning is light, they practise it,
Because it is in the power of their hand.
2 And they covet fields, and take *them* by violence;
And houses, and take *them* away:
So they oppress a man and his house,
Even a man and his heritage.

CHAP. II.

This and the next chapter should be read in connexion. They form a single prophecy, the subject of which is the cause of the coming judgment, viz. the sins of the great men and the rulers. The sins and their punishment are over and over again described with increasing intensity. First of all in ii. 1—5. Then in *v.* 6 the offenders inveigh against this troublesome preaching, and the prophet rejoins in *v.* 7. In *vv.* 8—10 a second description of the offences of the grandees is given, followed, in *v.* 11, by a digression on the caricature of prophecy patronized by them. The last two verses of the chapter interrupt the sequence of thought (see on chap. iii.).

1—5. SIN AND ITS CORRESPONDING PUNISHMENT.

1. *and work evil*] To 'work,' as distinguished from 'devise' and to 'practise' or 'execute,' is to prepare ways and means (see Isai. xli. 4). Obs., it is no mere act of thoughtlessness, or passionate impulse, which is here denounced, but a set purpose of dispossessing the small proprietors.

upon their beds] The natural place for reflexion, whether in a bad sense (as here and Ps. xxxvi. 4), or in a good (as Ps. lxiii. 6).

it is in the power of their hand] A doubt as to the meaning has arisen from the fact that the word *el* here rendered 'power' is more commonly used for 'god.' But Lagarde has shewn that the root-meaning of *el* is 'that to which one reaches out.' Comp. Acts xvii. 27.

2. *And they covet fields*, &c.] 'To covet' is itself a gross offence against the law of God, as the deepest of all the Ten Commandments shews (Ex. xx. 17). Large additions to one's estates were diametrically opposed to the spirit, if not always to the letter, of the law of land-tenure among the Israelites. See Num. xxvii. 1—11, xxxiii. 54, 1 Kings xxi. 4, Lev. xxv. 8—17. These rich men would have had a perfect right to purchase the lease of another man's property, subject indeed to the law of redistribution in the 49th year (the year of Jubilee)—a relic of the old Village Community system, which seems to have prevailed anciently among Semitic as well as Aryan races (comp. Sir R. Maine's *Village Communities*, and Mr Fenton's article on the Law of Jubilee, in the

Therefore thus saith the LORD;
Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, 3
From which ye shall not remove your necks; עוֹנֹתֵיכֶם
Neither shall ye go haughtily:
For this time *is* evil.
In that day shall *one* take up a parable against you,
And lament with a doleful lamentation, 4

Theological Review, 1878). But, as the account of Naboth the Jezreelite (1 Kings xxi.) shews, the small Israelitish proprietors were too sturdy and too law-abiding to accede to proposals of purchasers when they could possibly avoid it. Hence, on the immoral principle that 'might is right' (or, as the prophet says, 'because it is in the power of their hands'), they followed the example of Ahab, and used fraudulent or openly violent means—fraud is suggested by the language of *v.* 1, open violence by that of *v.* 2. Isaiah denounces the same offences in v. 8; Amos, probably, in iv. 1.

3. *Therefore*, &c.] The 'devising' of the dishonest grandees is met by the 'devising' of Jehovah; oppression is punished by oppression. Comp. the striking correspondences between sins and their punishments in Isai. v.

against this family] The grandees, as the heads and representatives of the nation (Isai. ix. 15), have involved all ranks in a common ruin. Israel is disparagingly called 'this family' (instead of 'my family'). Comp. Isai. vi. 10, xxviii. 14, xxix. 13, Jer. viii. 5, xiii. 10 (where the phrase is used of Judah), Isai. viii. 6, ix. 16 (where it seems to refer to the northern kingdom), and Jer. xxxiii. 24 (where it is applied even to the heathen neighbours of the Jews). Here it evidently refers to the northern and southern kingdoms alike—'the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt' (Amos iii. 1).

your necks] The 'evil,' then, is a foreign yoke; comp. Jer. xxvii. 12. They are likened to cattle (as Amos iv. 1).

4. *shall one take up a parable*] Or, **a taunting song** (as probably Isai. xiv. 4, Hab. ii. 6). The Hebr. *māshāl* means properly a saying characterized by parallelism—'the parallelism may consist either in the moral application of emblems, or simply in the parallel disposition of the lines and the sense. From the fact that emblems were generally applied in a witty, satirical manner, *māshāl* sometimes obtains the meaning of taunt-song.' So, too, we may add, the participial noun *mōshēl* acquires the sense of taunt-singer in Num. xxi. 27, Ezek. xvi. 44. In the present instance, the prophet means (see next clause) that the same words from different speakers would be at once a lamentation and a taunt. When an Israelite should say plaintively, 'It is all over,' his enemy should take up his words in a tone of triumph or mockery.

and lament with a doleful lamentation, &c.] Rather, **and lament with a lamentation:**

'It is done,' they shall say, נָהָה נָהָה
'We be utterly spoiled:

And say, We be utterly spoiled:
He hath changed the portion of my people:
How hath he removed *it* from me!
Turning away he hath divided our fields.
5 Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot
In the congregation of the LORD.

6, 7. *Hostility of the two classes of Prophets.*

6 Prophesy ye not, *say they to them that* prophesy:

He changeth the portion of my people;
How doth he remove it from me!
Unto the rebellious he divideth our fields.'

The purport of the complaint is that Jehovah (for the Israelites recognize him as the sender of their trouble) has transferred the promised land to heathen men, who from their very birth have been rebels against Jehovah. The epithet 'rebellious' deserves notice. True, it is the Jews who use it, but the prophet would certainly have sanctioned its employment. We find him, in chap. v. 15, announcing the punishment of the heathen for their disobedience, and his great contemporary Isaiah, in x. 5—15 (comp. xxxvii. 26), rebuking Sennacherib for 'vaunting himself' against Him who gave him his commission. Both prophets imply that the heathen had a certain natural light, which might have led them to the true God, or at least have preserved them from rejecting Him, when His claims were brought before them. Comp. St Paul's words in Rom. i. 20, 'so that they are without excuse.'

5. *Therefore thou shalt have none*, &c.] Because the Israelites have violated the divinely sanctioned law of land-tenure, 'therefore' they shall have no future opportunity of redistributing the soil in accordance with equity. And this, because the 'congregation of Jehovah,' from which such a redistribution should proceed, is itself about to be dissolved.

that shall cast a cord by lot] Rather, **that shall cast the measuring-line upon a lot** (i.e. an allotment); alluding to the original distribution of Canaan by lot. Of course, the redistribution of the land in the year of Jubilee was governed, not by lot, but by regard for the old family-rights; still the primitive term 'lot' held its ground (so Ps. xvi. 5, cxxv. 3).

6, 7. HOSTILITY OF THE TWO CLASSES OF PROPHETS.

6. *Prophesy ye not*] Micah and the prophets like-minded with him (e.g. Isaiah) are angrily bidden by the flattering, popular prophets to hold their peace. Comp. Isai. xxx. 9, 10, 'For it is a rebellious

They shall not prophesy to them, *that* they shall not take shame.
O *thou that art* named the house of Jacob,
Is the spirit of the LORD straitened?
Are these his doings?
Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?

people...Who say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits (or, illusions);' also Amos ii. 12, v. 10. Thus, in the times of Isaiah, Amos, and Micah, we can already detect the germs of the persecution which broke out with such severity under Manasseh. The faithful prophets of Jehovah were sometimes obliged to hide themselves (Isai. xxx. 20), and it seemed as if 'the godly man had perished out of the land' (Mic. vii. 2). From the context in which these words 'Prophesy ye not,' occur, we should suppose that the speakers were the 'rebellious people' (see Isai. xxx. 9, 20), represented by the grandees, though most commentators think that they are rather the unfaithful, smooth-speaking prophets, sometimes called 'false prophets.' Obs., the word used here and in *v.* 11 (also in Amos vii. 16, Ezek. xxi. 2) for 'prophesy' is literally 'drop;' it was perhaps originally a figurative expression for the constant flow and persuasive eloquence of prophecy. It is however probably used by Micah's hostile critics in an unfavourable sense ('dropping'=constantly finding fault, comp. 'here a little, there a little,' Isai. xxviii. 10), so that we may venture to render here, **Prattle ye not.** Speech in general is said to 'drop as the dew,' Deut. xxxii. 2; comp. Job xxix. 22. See R.V. margin, and Driver in *Expositor* 1887, p. 263 &c.

say they to them that prophesy] Rather, **(thus) they prattle.** The prophet takes up their word, and flings it back to them sarcastically. This view makes the grandees the speakers, in accordance with the context. Most recent commentators, however, suppose a sudden introduction of the false prophets (see last note).

they shall not prophesy to them] Rather, **they should not prattle of these things.** Micah and his companions are exceeding the limits of their commission. It is for the grandees to decide political matters; and to chatter about the ruin of the state is simply high treason.

that they shall not take shame] Rather, **reproaches are unceasing.** By 'reproaches' the hostile speakers mean denunciations such as that in *vv.* 1, 2, Isai. v. Comp. again Isai. xxviii. 10 (where however A. V. needs to be corrected).

7. *that art named*, &c.] 'But only as far as the title goes' (Calvin); comp. on 'this family' (*v.* 3). So Isai. xlviii. 1.

is the spirit of the Lord straitened?] Has Jehovah ceased to be 'long-suffering' (Ex. xxxiv. 6)? 'Straitened,' lit. 'shortened.'

are these his doings?] Anger is not natural to Jehovah, neither is punishment His chosen work (comp. Isai. xxviii. 21). As long as His people 'walk uprightly,' He responds to them with friendly words and acts.

8 Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy:
Ye pull off the robe with the garment
From them that pass by securely *as men* averse from war.
9 The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses;
From their children have ye taken *away* my glory for ever
10 Arise ye, and depart; for this *is* not *your* rest:
Because it is polluted, it shall destroy *you*, even *with* a sore destruction.
11 If a man walking *in* the spirit and falsehood do lie, *saying*,

8—10. Parallel to *vv.* 1—5.

8. *Even of late my people*, &c.] Rather, **But of late**, &c. The divine speaker states the cause of His enforced deviation from His natural course of action. Man has misused His gift of free will: God's people has of late been taking a hostile attitude. Towards whom? Not immediately against Jehovah, whom indeed they cannot cease to recognize as their national deity, but against those who are under His most immediate care—the poor and needy. (The rendering and even the reading of this verse is very doubtful, but the above explanation probably gives the general sense. One difficulty is that in this verse, according to the received text, the phrase 'my people' means the oppressive grandees, whereas in *v.* 9 it is applied to the oppressed poor; comp. Isai. iii. 15.)

ye pull off the robe with the garment, &c.] Rather, **clean away from the garment**. The 'robe' is the spreading mantle; the 'garment' is the so-called 'upper garment.' The former would of course be the most valuable article of apparel; the richest mantles were imported from Babylon (Josh. vii. 21).—It is probably not vulgar robbery which is here denounced, but a remorseless use of the rights of a creditor (contrary to the spirit of Ex. xxii. 26, 27).

9. *The women of my people*] i.e. the unprotected widows. A similar complaint is made in Isaiah (x. 2).

my glory] i.e. the privileges which every Israelite possessed as a member of God's people. The prophet implies that the children of the widows have been sold into foreign slavery, which virtually annulled their glorious birthright. 'How could they sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?'

10. *Arise ye, and depart*] As a just retribution for the expulsion of others, the oppressors shall be expelled themselves.

your rest] i.e. your resting-place (as Isai. xi. 10). 'Rest' was one of the chief aspects under which Canaan was regarded (Deut. xii. 9, Isai. lxiii. 14, Ps. xcv. 11).

because it is polluted, &c.] Rather, because of uncleanness ye shall be destroyed with, &c. (so Sept., Koorda).

11. *If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood*, &c.] Who is the popular prophet? He who walks in a spirit of falsehood (Micah's

I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink;
He shall even be the prophet of this people.
I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; 12
I will surely gather the remnant of Israel;
I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah,
As the flock in the midst of their fold:
They shall make great noise by reason of *the multitude of* men.
The breaker is come up before them: 13

phrase is perhaps a hendiadys), and promises material blessings of the most palpable kind (represented by 'wine and strong drink'). It was not merely his reference to temporal goods which made such a man a 'false prophet,' but his assurance of the divinely ordained connexion between righteousness and prosperity. For 'in the spirit and falsehood,' it is simpler to render, **after wind and falsehood.** (Dathe thinks *v.* 11 is misplaced, and should come after *v.* 6.)

12. *I will surely assemble...*] Some commentators think that this and the next verse represent one of the flattering oracles of the false prophets; but the style is precisely that of the true prophets, and indeed of Micah himself (see iv. 6, 7). There is a question, however, whether the verses are not misplaced; whether their present position is not due to a later editor, rather than to Micah himself. There are no doubt very abrupt transitions in prophecy; but this is exceptionally difficult, as the tone and style of *vv.* 12, 13 is so entirely different from that which precedes. See Driver, *Expositor* 1887, p. 263 &c.

O Jacob, all of thee] Not merely a part of the nation; not merely the ten tribes, or the others, but the whole of Israel ('Jacob' as in i. 5). And yet only 'the remnant of Israel;' enough, but only just enough, to form the nucleus of a nobler Israel (comp. Isai. x. 20, 21). The promise is therefore for those who shall come out of the trial repentant and purified. See the parallel passages, Jer. xxxi. 8, Ezek. xxxiv. 11—14.

as the sheep of Bozrah, &c.] Rather, **as sheep into a fold, as a flock in the midst of its pasture.**

13. *The breaker is come up*, &c.] Rather, '**One that breaketh through is gone up before them; they have broken through, and passed on to the gate,** &c. 'One that breaketh through'—i.e. that part of the army which was told off to prepare a free way for the advance of the main body. Others make this the epithet of a conqueror, who in the light of other prophecies can be no other than the Messiah. Observe that Jehovah ('our king,' Isai. xxxiii. 22) is not absent from His people; He leads the van of the host, as of yore at the Exodus (Isai. lii. 12; comp. Ex. xiii. 21).

They have broken up, and have passed through the gate,
and are gone out by it:
And their king shall pass before them,
And the LORD on the head of them.

CHAP. III. 1—4. *Chiefly a description of the savage behaviour of the ruling class.*

3 And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob,
And ye princes of the house of Israel;
Is it not for you to know judgment?
2 Who hate the good, and love the evil;
Who pluck off their skin from off them,

is come up...have broken up] The verbs in the perfect tense picturesquely describe the irresistible progress of the hosts.

CHAP. III.

This chapter is the continuation of the preceding. The offences of the great men are depicted in still more glaring colours; a bitter spirit, reminding us of Dante's Inferno, pervades the description in *vv.* 2, 3. Next follows first, a reference to the judgment (*v.* 4, as in ii. 5, 10); then, a digression on the evil prophets (*vv.* 5—7, as in ii. 6, 11), whose work is contrasted with the strictly ethical character of the true revelation (*v.* 8, comp. ii. 7). The close of the entire prophecy is formed by an apostrophe to the grandees (*vv.* 9—11), and the declaration that Jerusalem will be utterly destroyed on account of its sins (*v.* 12).

1—4. CHIEFLY A DESCRIPTION OF THE SAVAGE BEHAVIOUR OF THE RULING CLASS.

1. *O heads of Jacob*] The prophet addresses the official class of all Israel, especially the judges, who appear from Jer. xxi. 11, 12 to have been (in Judah at any rate) chiefly members of the royal family (a numerous body in Judah as well as in Egypt).

2. *who pluck off their skin from off them*] The description is figurative. We may infer that cannibalism was not unknown to the Israelites by hearsay or tradition, but not necessarily that it was practised by the ancestors of the Israelites, much less by the Israelites themselves. The meaning of the figure plainly is that the peasantry had lost their old independence, and fallen into a condition like that of the peasants of the Turkish empire. This arose from a change in the social organism. "The nobles of Israel were no longer great farmers, as Saul and Nabal had been, living among the peasantry and sharing their toil...The introduction of such a commerce, throwing the Hebrews into immediate relations with the great emporium of international traffic (Tyre), necessarily led to accumulation of wealth in a few hands, and to the corresponding impoverishment of the class without capital, as exportation raised the

And their flesh from off their bones;
Who also eat the flesh of my people, 3
And flay their skin from off them;
And they break their bones,
And chop *them* in pieces, as for the pot,
And as flesh within the caldron.
Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear 4
them:
He will even hide his face from them at that time,
As they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.

5—8. *The fate of the false prophets, whose unauthorized smooth-speaking Micah contrasts with his own divinely inspired courage.*

Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make 5
my people err,
That bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace;
And he that putteth not into their mouths,
They even prepare war against him.

price of the necessaries of life" (Prof. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 347).

their skin] i. e. the skin of the house of Israel.

4. *Then shall they cry*] We must suppose that, when Micah delivered this prophecy (of which we can have but a summary), he introduced between *v.* 3 and *v.* 4 a description of 'the day of the LORD,' the day of just retribution.

5—8. THE FATE OF THE FALSE PROPHETS, WHOSE UNAUTHORIZED SMOOTH-SPEAKING MICAH CONTRASTS WITH HIS OWN DIVINELY INSPIRED COURAGE.

5. *that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace*] i. e. who, when they are given something to eat, cry, Peace. To 'bite with the teeth' is a quaint, rough expression in harmony with the foregoing image from cannibalism. Choice language would have been thrown away on such seared consciences. Comp. the description of the priests, 1 Sam. ii. 13—16.

they even prepare war against him] Lit., **they consecrate war**, a prophetic formula (Jer. vi. 4, Joel iii. 9, comp. Isa. xiii. 3, 'my consecrated ones'). The meaning is, that if at any time the rulers of the people are behindhand with the accustomed fee to these mercenary prophets, the tone of the latter at once begins to change. Instead of announcing peace, they declare that Jehovah is wroth with his people, and will send war. Strictly speaking, to 'consecrate war' is to open a

6 Therefore night *shall be* unto you, that *ye* shall not have
a vision;
And it shall be dark unto you, that *ye* shall not divine;
And the sun shall go down over the prophets,
And the day shall be dark over them.
7 Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners con-
founded:
Yea, they shall all cover their lips;
For *there is* no answer of God.
8 But truly I am full *of* power by the spirit of the LORD,
And *of* judgment, and *of* might,
To declare unto Jacob his transgression,
And to Israel his sin.

9—12. *A recapitulation of the national sins, with a more distinct declaration of the bitter end.*

9 Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob,
And princes of the house of Israel,
That abhor judgment, and pervert all equity.
10 They build up Zion with blood,

campaign (with sacred rites), but here the antithesis with 'that cry, Peace' requires us to take it in a modified sense.

6. *night shall be unto you*, &c.] The prophet is still addressing the rulers. Because of their rapacity, and their league with false prophets, their land shall be overshadowed by adversity, and there shall be no prophecy, whether false or true, to guide them. The false prophets will be ashamed, because of the non-fulfilment of their oracles; and the true will have no fresh revelation till the old cycle of prophecies has been fulfilled. Comp. Lam. ii. 9.

7. *their lips*] Rather, **their beard**; the phrase includes the face up to the nose. A sign of mourning, Lev. xiii. 45, Ezek. xxiv. 17, 22.

8. *But truly*, &c.] The sign of a fresh paragraph, placed here in most editions, should rather be at the beginning of *v.* 9.

9—12. A RECAPITULATION OF THE NATIONAL SINS, WITH A MORE DISTINCT DECLARATION OF THE BITTER END.

10. *build up Zion with blood*] Probably this alludes to the building of palaces and fortifications, always a fruitful source of oppression in the East. 'Blood' is used by synecdoche for 'violent conduct leading to the ruin of others;' so Isai. i. 15, lix. 3, Prov. i. 11, and other passages. Unless we admit this, we shall have to take an incredibly dark view of the state of public morals in the Jewish state.

And Jerusalem with iniquity.
The heads thereof judge for reward,
And the priests thereof teach for hire,
And the prophets thereof divine for money:
Yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say,
Is not the LORD among us?
None evil can come upon us.
Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed *as* a field,

11. *the priests thereof teach for hire*] 'The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law (rather, 'law,' lit. 'teaching') at his mouth,' Mal. ii. 7. The nature of the teaching appears from Deut. xvii. 9—13; comp. Hag. ii. 11—13, Jer. ii. 8. It was explanatory of the Law, and based upon ancient tradition (comp. Deut. xxiv. 8, 'as I commanded them'). See note on iv. 2.

divine for money] This was the custom of the 'seers' in former times; even Samuel appears to have received fees (1 Sam. ix. 7, 8). But it had been given up by the later prophets, when they devoted themselves more entirely to moral and spiritual functions.

lean upon the Lord] The priests and prophets, then, whom Micah so severely chastises, were like himself worshippers of Jehovah. But their worship was formal, and their faith mechanical. They said, *Is not Jehovah among us?* i.e. is not Jehovah's favour assured by his presence within the temple (comp. Jer. vii. 4), forgetting that, as Milton puts it, in the spirit of Isai. i. 11—13, he doth 'prefer Before all temples the upright heart and pure.' For the phrase, comp. Ex. xvii. 7, 'they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?'

12. *be plowed as a field*] This striking prophecy was quoted at a critical point in the history of Jeremiah when 'the priests and the prophets and all the people' had pronounced sentence of death upon the prophet by acclamation. 'Certain of the elders of the land' we are told invoked the respectful treatment of Micah by king Hezekiah as a precedent for granting Jeremiah a similar immunity. So far from putting Micah to death, Hezekiah, they declare, had been moved by his sombre prediction to 'fear the Lord and beseech the Lord,' 'and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced upon them' (Jer. xxvi. 17—19). In fact, all prophecy is conditional. The prophets declare the great principles of God's moral government, and apply them to individual cases. But if the moral conditions of the cases to which these principles are applied be altered, the threatening or the promise is postponed, modified, or recalled. We have no difficulty therefore, in reconciling the genuineness of Micah's prophecy with the fact thus stated by Dean Stanley. "The destruction which was then threatened has never been completely fulfilled. Part of the south-eastern portion of the city has for several centuries been arable land; but the rest has always been within the walls. In the Maccabæan wars (1 Macc. iv. 38) the Temple courts were overgrown with shrubs, but

And Jerusalem shall become heaps,
And the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

CHAP. IV. 1—4. *The Ideal of Happiness realized.*

4 But in the last days it shall come to pass,

this has never been the case since." (*Jewish Church*, II. 464.) There is a parallel to this passage of Micah in Isaiah (xxxii. 13, 14), which is all the more remarkable as Isaiah generally predicts the destruction of the Assyrians and the deliverance of Jerusalem (e.g. xxix. 5, xxx. 19, xxxi. 4). At the time when Micah and Isaiah delivered their gloomy vaticinations, the moral state of Jerusalem must have been worse than usual. The uncompromising severity with which they announced the inevitable punishment was (as Jer. xxvi. 17—19 shews) the means chosen of God for producing at least a partial repentance.

the mountain of the house] i.e. mount Moriah.

as the high places of the forest] Rather, **heights in the wood.** The temple-mount shall be overgrown with low brushwood (comp. Isai. xxxii. 13). The word rendered 'heights' (*bāmōth*) may also mean 'high places,' and perhaps the writer means to suggest that the temple shall be treated no better than if it were a 'high place.' The plural 'heights' to correspond to the plural 'heaps.' See 1 Macc. iv. 38.

CHAP. IV.

Chaps. iv. and v. belong together, though the connexion is not always clear. They appear to have been revised subsequently to their first composition, and the original draft of the prophecy seems to have contained iv. 1—4, 11—13, v. 1—4, 7—15. The student will do well to read these passages together in the first instance, before proceeding to the study of the prophecy in its present form. The fundamental idea is, that Israel will certainly be restored to prosperity, because the promise cannot be broken; but that a period of sore trial must precede this. The transitions are abrupt, and will be indicated below. The prophet begins (*vv.* 1—4), with the well-known description of the coming golden age, which we find again (with one verse less) in Isai. ii. 2—4. It has been much disputed which prophecy is the earlier. But Isaiah cannot have copied the verses from Micah, for the prophecy to which it is appended in Micah (chap. iii.) was delivered in the time of Hezekiah (see Jer. xxvi. 18). It is possible that both Isaiah and Micah took the prophecy from an older work; some affinities have been traced with Joel (comp. esp. Joel iii. 10, 18). Similar quotations from older prophecies are believed to occur in Isai. xv., xvi., Jer. xlix. 7—22.

1—4. THE IDEAL OF HAPPINESS REALIZED.

1. *But*] The Auth. Vers. has done its best to soften the abruptness of the transition from iii. 12 to iv. 1. It understands the meaning to be

That the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be
established in the top of the mountains,
And *it shall be* exalted above the hills;
And people shall flow unto it.
And many nations shall come, and say, 2
Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
And to the house of the God of Jacob;

something like this:—In spite of this awful prospect of judgment, God has a bright future in store both for Jerusalem and for Israel. In the Hebrew, however, the passage iv. 1—4 is simply added on to iii. 12; there is no properly adversative particle prefixed; the contrast is rather implied than expressed. It seems as if Micah's mind was so filled up by the thought of judgment, that there was hardly any room for the thought of national regeneration. When the image does present itself to his imagination, it is only as by a lightning-flash, which soon passes away, and leaves the horizon as gloomy as before. There is nothing in Micah like a developed doctrine of the latter days, such as we have to some extent in Isaiah.

in the last days] Hebr. *b'akharith hayyâmîm*. This rendering is misleading; the Messianic period described in the following verses has no 'last days;' it is without an end (Isai. ix. 7). Render, therefore, in stricter accordance with the Hebrew, **in the days to come** (lit., 'in the sequel of the days'); and comp. Jer. xxiii. 20, 'The anger of Jehovah shall not turn back, till he have executed, and till he have carried into effect the purposes of his heart: *in future days* ye shall duly consider it' (Henderson's translation), also Deut. iv. 30, xxxi. 29, and the phrase in an Assyrian historical inscription *ana akhrat yumi* = 'for future days.' A similar mistake has been made in 1 Tim. iv. 1, where ἐν ὑστέροις καιροῖς is rendered in Auth. Vers. 'in the latter times;' the Revised Version corrects, 'in later times.'

the mountain of the house of the Lord] i.e. not merely mount Moriah (as in iii. 12), but by synecdoche for Jerusalem (comp. end of *v.* 2).

in the top] Rather, **at the head**. The lower mountains radiating, as it were, in all directions from it. "A similar physical change is anticipated for Jerusalem in Zech. xiv. 10, and for the valley of Jehoshaphat, in connexion with the 'day of Jehovah,' in Joel iii. 12. Ezekiel, too, speaks of having been transported in an ecstatic state to 'a very high mountain' (xl. 2), evidently alluding to this passage." The rendering of Auth. Vers. implies an image too hyperbolical to be accepted without compulsion.

2. *many nations...*] 'Many,' in contrast to the single nation (as yet hardly reckoned as such) at whose mouth the Gentiles receive instruction. The picture of Jerusalem as the religious metropolis of the world is familiar to us in the prophets (comp. Isai. xi. 10, lx. 3, Jer. iii. 17, Zech. ii. 11, viii. 22, 23). The Christian reason, enlightened by the course of Providence, sees that the picture is ideal.

And he will teach us of his ways,
And we will walk in his paths:
For the law shall go forth of Zion,
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
3 And he shall judge among many people,
And rebuke strong nations afar off;
And they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruninghooks:
Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war any more.
4 But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree;
And none shall make *them* afraid:
For the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken *it*.
5 For all people will walk every one in the name of his god,

of his ways] Rather, **out of his ways.** Comp. Ps. xciv. 12, 'teachest out of thy law.' God's 'law' and God's 'ways' are revealed in full to the prophets, and they bring out 'here a little, and there a little' according to the needs of the time.

the law] Auth. Vers., however, is misleading. The Hebrew simply has *Tōrāh*, which means 'direction' or 'instruction,' and is "the suitable term for the authoritative counsel given orally by the priests (Deut. xvii. 11) and prophets to those who consulted them on points of ritual and practice respectively." Comp. above, on iii. 11, and Prof. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, pp. 292, 3. Not that the *Tōrāh* of the latter days is to be restricted within the old boundaries; the Spirit is to 'guide into all the truth,' and probably the best equivalent (if we do not insist on an unnatural uniformity of rendering) would here be **revelation.**

3. *among many people*] Rather, **between many peoples.**

rebuke] Rather, **be umpire for.** How remarkable, the constant reiteration in the prophets of the ultimate extinction of war, to which this passage adds the substitution of arbitration!

they shall beat their swords...] In Joel iii. 10 we have the same image reversed. Comp. also ix. 5, Hos. ii. 18, Zech. ix. 10.

4. *every man under his vine...*] Comp. 1 Kings iv. 25, 2 Kings xviii. 31. The old agricultural ideal. The depression of the peasantry, owing to the growing concentration of wealth, naturally made a peasant-prophet like Micah look forward with hope to a reaction, when each family should have its own allotment of land. This verse is omitted in Isa. ii.; it would no doubt have been unsuitable in that connexion.

5. TRANSITION. *For all people will walk...*] Rather, **For all peoples walk,** &c. The ideal time described in *vv.* 1—4 is still far distant. 'The nations abroad all worship gods of their own; let us therefore all the more steadily walk in the name of our God.' The

And we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

6, 7. *Prophecy of restoration.*

In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, 6
And I will gather her that is driven out,
And *her* that I have afflicted;
And I will make her that halted a remnant, 7
And her that was cast far off a strong nation:
And the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion
From henceforth, even for ever.

8—10. *The revival of the Kingdom of David; misery of the preceding period.*

And thou, O tower of the flock, 8

'name' of God is that side of His nature which can be revealed to man (sometimes spoken of, even in the Old Testament, as a Divine Person, e. g. Isai. xxx. 27, lix. 19); and to walk in this name means to live in mystic union with God as He has revealed Himself, and under His protection. 'To walk for ever and ever' is opposed to the temporary 'walking' of the idolaters. 'The everlasting God' (Isai. xl. 28) confers the attribute of everlastingness on His people.' Comp. Isai. xlv. 16, 17 (contrast between the destruction of the idolaters and the 'everlasting salvation' of Israel).

6, 7. PROPHECY OF RESTORATION.

6. *In that day*] i.e. in the Messianic age (*v.* 1).

will I assemble, &c.] A similar promise has been made in ii. 12. There the emphasis is laid on the closing of the national schism; here, on the remedy to be applied to the physical and moral misery of the exiles. In both cases, it is only a remnant of the nominal Israelites which is restored. Comp. the imitation in Zeph. iii. 19.

7. *And I will make...a remnant*] i.e. I will treat Israel, in spite of her 'halting' condition, as the 'remnant' to which the Messianic promises belong.

shall reign] Strictly, **will have become king**; i.e. will have assumed the royal functions, without the dubious intervention of a merely human representative. So Isai. xxiv. 23, lii. 7.

8—10. THE REVIVAL OF THE KINGDOM OF DAVID; MISERY OF THE PRECEDING PERIOD.

8. *And thou, O tower of the flock*, &c.] It is clear that the prophet intends Jerusalem, which he addresses by an enigmatical title, to arrest

The strong hold of the daughter of Zion,
Unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion;
The kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.
9 Now why dost thou cry out aloud?
Is there no king in thee?
Is thy counseller perished?

attention and stimulate reflexion. (Other instances of this, Isai. xxii. 5, xxix. 1, Jer. xxi. 13.) But why does he select this particular title? Two answers may be given. It was either (1) suggested by the figurative description of Israel as a flock (*v.* 6, ii. 12), or (2) by the situation of a tower called 'the tower of the flock' between Jerusalem and Bethlehem—Bethlehem, which was appointed to be the birthplace of the Messianic King (v. 2). The existence of such a town in the situation described is deduced from Gen. xxxv. 21, where Auth. Vers. inaccurately renders 'the tower of Edar'). It may be doubted however whether this particular tower is sufficiently near Jerusalem to suit the context, for the prophet clearly indicates that it was either upon or close to the hill or hill-side called Ophel (see next note): Isaiah, too, in a prophecy parallel in more ways than one with Micah's prophecy (see on iii. 12), mentions in combination 'Ophel and watch-tower' (Isai. xxxii. 14, literally rendered) in a description of the desolation of Jerusalem. The 'tower of the flock' mentioned in Genesis was probably a different one. There may have been many towers with this name (see 2 Kings xviii. 8, 2 Chron xxvi. 10), just as there was more than one hill called Ophel (see 2 Kings v. 24, where Auth. Vers. renders 'Ophel' loosely 'tower'). The phrase 'tower of the flock' simply means that the tower was designed as a shepherd's refuge against robbers.

the strong hold of the daughter of Zion] Literally, **the height**, &c. It is a particular fortified hill which is meant, the so-called Ophel—according to most, the southern end of the hill Moriah between the Temple and Siloam, bounded on the east by the Kedron, and on the west by the Tyropœon valley. (But this view is uncertain.) This 'Ophel' had its fortifications strengthened by Jotham (2 Chron. xxxvii. 3), and here becomes the representative of the power of Jerusalem.

the first dominion] i.e. the kingdom of Israel in its widest extent. So most commentators; but the expression is peculiar.

9. *Now why dost thou cry out aloud?*] The prophet from his watch-tower beholds the capture of Jerusalem, and hears the lamentation of its inhabitants (comp. Isai. x. 30). Absorbed in high visions of the future, he deprecates this unmanly despair. True, all is lost, for the present; but they may carry with them into exile a consoling promise of deliverance.

Is there no king in thee?] Is it because thy king has been carried captive? Comp. Hos. xiii. 10, 'Where then is thy king that he may save thee?'

thy counseller] A synonym for 'thy king.' The root of *mélech* (king)

For pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail.
Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: 10
For now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field,
And thou shalt go *even* to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered;

in Aramaic means 'to counsel.' The Messiah is called 'Wonderful counsellor' in Isai. ix. 6.

10. *Be in pain*, &c.] There is no remedy for Zion's distress. Having sinned, she must bear her punishment. Having lost her first purity, she must be refined.

for now shalt thou go forth] 'Now,' because the future is realized by the prophet as if present. To heighten the effect of his announcement, he describes one by one the stages of the calamity,—the going out of the city, the dwelling in the open country, houseless and unprotected, and lastly the coming to Babylon, the scene of captivity. To 'go forth'=to surrender, as Isai. xxxvi. 16, 2 Kings xxiv. 12.

and thou shalt go even to Babylon] These words are very difficult, when viewed in relation to the context. For 1, the enemy, whose destruction the prophet anticipates, is the contemporary kingdom of Assyria (see v. 6), not that of Babylon, which had in fact been conquered by Tiglath-Pileser, and only succeeded to the place and power of Assyria a century later; and 2, we read in *v.* 12 that Jehovah has brought the hostile nations to Jerusalem that they may be destroyed there, which seems not to allow space for a transportation of the Judæans to Babylon. Thus the difficulty in admitting that Micah really foretold the Babylonian captivity is based on purely exegetical grounds. It has indeed been replied 1, that Babylon is here mentioned only as a province of the Assyrian empire, and 2, that it appears from 2 Kings xvii. 24 (confirmed by the Annals of Sargon, *Records of the Past*, VII. 29), that Sargon transported a part of the rebellious population of Babylonia to N. Israel, which we may presume that, according to the custom of the Assyrians, he replaced by captive Israelites. It is therefore quite conceivable that in foretelling an invasion of Judah by Sargon, the prophet might represent the captives of Judah as following their Israelitish brethren to Babylonia. This reply is perhaps adequate as against the first-mentioned difficulty, but it leaves the second in its full force. It is necessary therefore to assume either that these words, 'and thou shalt go to Babylon,' are the interpolation of a later editor of the prophetic writings, who overlooked or misunderstood the context, or that they represent a subsequent revelation made by the Spirit of prophecy to Micah himself. The former view is perhaps at first sight objectionable, because it assumes that Divine Providence has not watched over the text of the Scriptures so as to prevent alterations from being made in their original form. But we must remember that the permanent function of the Old Testament for Christians is simply to point to Jesus

There the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.

11—13. *Wonderful change in the fortunes of God's people.*

11 Now also many nations are gathered against thee,

Christ, as the Saviour both of Jew and of Gentile, and that no superficial changes of the text are of any religious importance which leave the performance of this function unimpaired. The hypothesis of interpolation is confirmed (to mention the principal evidence only) by the occurrence of closely analogous words, undoubtedly interpolated, in the Septuagint version of iv. 8, the second part of which runs thus, *καὶ εἰσελεύσεται ἡ ἀρχὴ ἡ πρώτη, βασιλεία ἐκ Βαβυλῶνος τῇ θυγατρὶ Ἰερουσαλήμ.* These words seem to give us the point of view from which the students (translators or editors) of the Scriptures approached the prophecies after the exile. The great deliverance from Babylon swallowed up all others, and they discovered references to it which are not warranted by the context of the passages. In a certain sense, it is true, the Babylonian captivity *was* the fulfilment of the prophecy before us; for neither the actual punishment nor the actual deliverance of Jerusalem in Micah's time corresponded exactly to the prophet's statements. Whether it be for the repentance of Hezekiah, or for any other reason known only to God, Jerusalem was not suffered to come to such extremities as the prophet describes, and consequently the Divine interposition was not so striking and unique. If however we prefer the second of the alternatives mentioned above, analogies for this view are also forthcoming. Isaiah repeatedly intermixes the matter of later discourses with that of earlier ones—an inevitable consequence of the mode in which the prophetic discourses were brought into their present form on the basis of notes and recollections (see the present annotator's edition of *Isaiah*).

there shalt thou be delivered] If we accept the former of the alternatives proposed in the foregoing note, so that 'and thou shalt go even to Babylon' becomes an interpolation, we must suppose the promised deliverance to take place 'in the field' (or open country) where the people of Jerusalem have assembled. They are in fact on the point of surrendering to the Assyrians, their king (see v. 1) has suffered the grossest indignity, when Jehovah suddenly interposes for their relief. Otherwise the deliverance will be that from the Babylonian exile, a view however which is difficult to reconcile with *v.* 12.

11—13. WONDERFUL CHANGE IN THE FORTUNES OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

11. *Now also many nations...*] The 'many nations' are either the Assyrians (comp. Isai. xxxiii. 3), or the peoples who after their defeat come to worship at Jerusalem (*vv.* 1, 2); but v. 5 is in favour of the former view. They gather together to besiege Jerusalem (comp. Ezek. xxxviii., xxxix., Joel iii., Zech. xii., xiv.); how fruitlessly, the next two verses declare. 'Now also' should rather be **And now**. There is an

That say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon
Zion.
But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, 12
Neither understand they his counsel:
For he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.
Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: 13
For I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy
hoofs brass:
And thou shalt beat in pieces many people:
And I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD,
And their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.

implied contrast to the ideal description in *vv.* 1—4; we have already seen that the original draft of chaps. iv. v. has received various additions, and in order to get a clear connexion, we ought to inclose these inserted passages in parentheses. Thus if we bracket *vv.* 5—10, *v.* 11 becomes perfectly clear, and the original sequence of thought is restored.

12. *for he shall gather them*] Rather, **for he hath gathered them.** The fate which they have prepared for Zion will come upon themselves. This is Jehovah's counsel, but they know it not, for he hath brought them together, as sheaves are brought together to be threshed. Their ignorance is taken up by Jehovah into his purpose.

13. *thresh*] A figurative expression for 'conquer' (comp. Isai. xli. 15, Jer. li. 33), based on the barbarous custom of torturing those who had been taken captives in war (2 Sam. xii. 31, Amos i. 3). It may be called a phraseological 'survival.'

horn] Another figure for victorious might; comp. Deut. xxxiii. 17.

hoofs] Alluding to the custom of employing oxen to tread out the corn; comp. Deut. xxv. 4, 1 Cor. v. 9. Sometimes however a machine was used (see above).

many people] Rather, **many peoples.**

I will consecrate] Rather, **thou shalt** (so the four Greek versions, Pesh., and Vulg., comp. Gesenius, *Hebr. Gram.* § 47, Rem. 5) **devote.** See Lev. xxvii. 28, "every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord." The term 'devoted thing' is applied sometimes to lifeless objects (e.g. Lev. xxvii. 21), and sometimes to living (e.g. 1 Sam. xv. 21, 1 Kings xx. 42). In the latter case, devotion, strictly speaking, involved destruction, i.e. the restitution to the Lord of life of that breath which He for a time had granted.

CHAP. V.

The birth of the Messiah, and his rule; peace without and holiness within.—This chapter belongs together with the preceding, and presents similar characteristics. Here again we find the sequence of ideas interrupted by a passage clearly added by an after-thought (viz. *vv.* 5, 6); see below.

CHAP. V. 1. *Transition from the prediction of Jerusalem's extremity during the siege to the Messianic glories in prospect.*

Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops:
He hath laid siege against us:
They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

2—4. *The Messiah's birth and world-wide rule.*

But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah,

1. TRANSITION FROM THE PREDICTION OF JERUSALEM'S EXTREMITY DURING THE SIEGE TO THE MESSIANIC GLORIES IN PROSPECT.

1. *Now gather thyself in troops*] Rather, **Now thou mayest gather**, &c. Assyria may marshal her hosts, may lay siege against the holy city, may violate the person of the king, but from insignificant Bethlehem a royal Deliverer shall arise. 'Troops' may mean 'guerilla bands.'

O daughter of troops] Guerilla bands, like those in the Philistine oppression, seem intended. 'Daughter' is a personifying phrase, as in 'daughter of Jerusalem'. Most commentators think Jerusalem itself is referred to here, the 'troops' being the crowds of frightened citizens, but this is contrary to usage, 'troop' being constantly used in a military sense.

he hath laid siege] An abrupt change of number, as in Isai. i. 29. 'Assyria' is the implied subject.

smite...upon the cheek] A gross insult; comp. 1 Kings xxii. 24, Job xvi. 10, Luke xxii. 64.

the judge of Israel] i.e. the king (as in Amos ii. 3). The phrase is chosen partly to produce a kind of paronomasia in the Hebrew with the word for 'rod,' and partly perhaps because Jehovah has already been called the 'king' of Israel (ii. 13). 'Israel' here means Judah, as in i. 14 (see note).

2—4. THE MESSIAH'S BIRTH AND WORLD-WIDE RULE.

2. *But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah...*] (See the application of this passage by the Jewish Sanhedrin in Matt. ii. 6; comp. John vii. 42.) To the deep abasement of the actual king the prophet, in this and the following verses, opposes the Divine glory of the ideal King. Mean as Bethlehem may be in outward appearance, it has been selected as the birthplace of the Messianic Deliverer. 'Ephratah,' or rather 'Ephrathah' (a fuller form of Ephrath), was another name for Bethlehem (1 Sam. xvii. 12, Ruth i. 2, iv. 11, 1 Chron. ii. 50, 51): its meaning ('fruitful') suggests that it originally belonged to the valley which leads up to Bethlehem, and which is still richly adorned with vines and olive-trees. The Septuagint rendering is peculiar, 'And thou Bethlehem, house of Ephratah,' which looks very much like a combination of two different renderings, which presuppose two different readings of the Hebrew text (the one, 'And thou, Bethlehem;' the other, 'And thou,

Though thou be little among the thousands of Judah,

Beth-Ephratah'). Some scholars indeed prefer the latter reading on exegetical grounds, and suppose that the present reading of the Hebrew text is incorrect, and that *lehem* in *Beth-lehem* is an interpolation, due to a confusion between the two meanings of Ephratah. This makes a little difference in the exegesis of the passage. 'House' in 'house of Ephratah' will have to be taken in the larger sense of the word, viz. for a subdivision of the 'thousand' or 'family.' This will very well suit the following words (as generally explained), which will then contain a statement that the people or households of the district of Ephrath (see above) were not numerous enough to form a 'thousand' or 'family' by themselves. The context also shews the essential point of the prophecy to be, not that the Deliverer shall be born at Bethlehem, but that he shall belong to the Davidic family. If we retain the received reading of the Hebrew text we may refer to the analogy of Isai. ix. 1, which (when rightly translated) mentions a particular region of Palestine as in some sense the object of special favour from the Messiah: the one prediction is not more circumstantial than the other. There remains however a difficulty connected with the compound form of the name. Why Bethlehem Ephratah, and not simply Bethlehem? It is hardly enough to reply that there was another Bethlehem in the territory of Zebulun (Josh. xix. 15), for the danger of confusion would be more naturally guarded against by giving the full name 'Bethlehem-judah' (Judg. xvii. 9, xix. 18). Nor can we attach much weight to the remark of Delitzsch, that the prophet substitutes Ephratah for Judah, because the former name "awakens so many reminiscences from the primitive history of Israel (Gen. xxxv. 16) and the Davidic kingdom (Ruth iv. 11)." *Messianic Prophecies* (by Curtiss), section 45.

though thou be little...] The Hebrew text according to most scholars, requires a different rendering—*art too small to be*, &c. This however is not strictly in accordance with grammar, and it is very possible that the Auth. Vers. is correct; only it requires us to suppose that one of the Hebrew words in this verse (*li-h'yoth*) has been written twice over, and that it has thus intruded into a wrong clause.—As a matter of fact, Bethlehem *was* a small and unimportant place. It is omitted in the list of cities of Judah in the received Hebrew text of Josh. xv. (though, together with ten other towns, it is found in the text of the Septuagint), and also in the list, Neh. xi. 25. It is also spoken of in John vii. 42 as κώμη. Yet poor, insignificant Bethlehem was to have the honour of giving birth to the Messiah.

"O sola magnarum urbium
Major Bethlem, cui contigit
Ducem salutis cœlitus
Incorporatum gignere."
Prudentius, *Hymn. Epiph.* 77.

thousands] A 'thousand' is another name for a 'family' (in the larger, technical sense of the word, = 'clan'), see Num. i. 16, x. 4,

Yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel;
Whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.
3 Therefore will he give them up,

Josh. xxii. 14, 21, &c. Several 'thousands' or 'families went to make up a 'tribe.'

unto me] Rather, **for me**, in pursuance of my will.

whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting] The meaning of the word rendered 'goings forth' is doubtful. If we keep this translation, we must explain it of the revelations of Jehovah to the early Israelites and to the patriarchs. In Isai. ix. 6 one part of the great compound name of the Messiah is 'God the Mighty One' (or, Hero), from which we may infer that the Messiah is the permanently visible manifestation of the delivering or punishing, or, in a word, world-governing aspect of the Deity. So too in Isai. lxiii. 9 we are told that in 'the days of old' (the same phrase which is here rendered 'everlasting') Jehovah, or the Angel who represented Him, sympathized with the trouble of His people, and delivered them; and in *v.* 15 of the same chapter that the attributes of Jehovah, regarded under this aspect, are 'jealousy' and 'heroism' (Auth. Vers., loosely, 'zeal' and 'strength'). We can hardly be wrong in inferring that in all these passages one and the same essential aspect of Jehovah is meant, and that the Messiah may be said, in harmony with prophetic teaching, to have been revealed at intervals from the patriarchal history onwards. In favour of this translation, it may be observed that it produces a striking antithesis between the former and the latter half of the verse; 'he shall come forth' being a part of the same verb from which the word rendered 'goings forth' is derived. But it is also permissible to render this word 'origins,' and to explain the plural as that of 'excellence' or extent, just as we find 'dominions' for 'dominion' in Ps. cxiv. 2 (literally rendered), and 'habitations' for 'habitation' in Isai. liv. 2. The passage will then become a statement either of the pre-existence of the Messiah in the eternal purposes of God (comp. Isai. xxii. 11, xxxvii. 26); or, which is more obvious and perfectly suitable to the context, of his descent from the ancient Davidic family—comp. Amos ix. 11, where 'the days of old' evidently refer to the reign of David. (David was already three centuries behind Micah.) In the latter case, we ought to render the passage before us, Whose origin hath been from aforetime, from the days of old. There is, in fact, properly speaking, no word in Hebrew exactly answering to 'everlasting.' See also vii. 14, 20, where Auth. Vers. rightly has, 'the days of old.'

3. *Therefore*] i.e. because the deliverance of Israel is to be a work of pure grace, and to proceed from the insignificant Bethlehem. It is assumed that the family of David will have sunk down as low as that of Jesse originally was—the same anticipation which we find expressed in Isai. xi. 1, 'There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse.'

Until the time *that* she which travaileth hath brought forth:
Then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.
And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, 4
In the majesty of the name of the LORD his God;
And they shall abide:
For now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

will he give them up] Jehovah will deliver Israel into the hands of its foes.

she which travaileth] i.e. she who is to bear. Probably (though this is not quite free from doubt) this is an allusion to Isaiah's great prophecy of Immanuel (Isai. vii. 14)—a prophecy of doubtful interpretation but most likely referring to the Messiah (see on *v.* 5). Otherwise cf. Isai. xxxvii. 3, and explain the community of believing Israel.

then the remnant of his brethren shall return] Rather, **and (until) the remnant of his brethren return.** 'Return' may be taken either in a physical or in a spiritual sense. If in the former, the 'remnant' will mean the exiles of Israel, wherever they might be scattered, including those of the Ten Tribes; if in the latter, it will refer rather to the Judæans who had escaped in the Judgment. The return of the long-lost tribes, and the thorough conversion of his own people, were equally upon the heart of the prophet.

unto] Or (if we explain 'return'='be converted'), **with.**

4. *And he shall stand and feed*] viz. his flock, as a shepherd. Over this restored and regenerate people the Messiah shall preside in the plenitude of Divine power. 'Stand,' as a shepherd amidst his flock, Isai. lxi. 5.

in the majesty of the name, &c.] This is not at all an otiose feature of the description. The 'Name' of Jehovah is an appellation of the self-revealing aspect (one might almost say, Person) of the Godhead. Comp. Isai. xxx. 27, 'Behold, the Name of Jehovah cometh from far... *his* lips are full of indignation,' &c. In fact, the Messiah, who is 'God the Mighty One,' may be said to be an incarnation of the Name of Jehovah.

abide] i.e. remain undisturbed in their land.

now shall he be great] 'Now,' from the point of view of the fulfilment of the prophecy (instead of 'then').

unto the ends of the earth] The Messiah's kingdom will more than supplant Assyria's; comp. Ps. ii. 8, lxxii. 8. Obs. how the Messianic hope developes and gathers strength in the atmosphere of Assyrian conquest.

5, 6. These verses appear to have been added by an after-thought. Two plausible reasons may be given for the insertion. 1. It was not clear who the 'many nations' and 'many peoples' of iv. 11, 13 were; the first clause of *v.* 5 may perhaps be taken as interpreting those rather

5 And this *man* shall be *the* peace,
When the Assyrian shall come into our land:
And when he shall tread in our palaces,
Then shall we raise against him seven shepherds,
And eight principal men.
6 And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword,
And the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof:
Thus shall he deliver *us* from the Assyrian,
When he cometh into our land,
And when he treadeth within our borders.

vague phrases of the Assyrians. 2. In the first gush of inspiration, the prophet had omitted the period of foreign rule over the land of Israel. Thus the picture of the Messianic time was left indistinct; by the insertion of *vv.* 5, 6 this omission was rectified. The connexion is improved, if we inclose these verses in a parenthesis; it should be observed that the same vague phrase 'many peoples' reappears in *vv.* 7, 8, indicating that these verses belonged to the original draft of the prophecy. How greatly our idea of the Biblical literature gains in distinctness by the insight we are now acquiring into the methods and processes of the prophetic writers and editors!

5. *the peace*] Rather, **Peace** (peace personified). An allusion perhaps to Isaiah's second great Messianic prophecy (Isai. ix. 6, 'Prince of peace'). There ought to be a full stop after 'Peace.'

when the Assyrian shall come...] This is quite correctly rendered; the prophet, speaking in the name of the people, looks forward to an Assyrian domination over the Holy Land. Many commentators unnecessarily suppose it to be a hypothetical clause—'supposing that another Assyrian should invade our land, Israel will be able to meet him with abundance of capable leaders,' and Castalio (Châtillon) compares the line of Virgil (*Ecl.* iv. 34),

> 'Alter erit tum Tiphys, et altera quae vehat Argo
> Delectos heroas.'

seven shepherds] 'Shepherds,' i.e. princes; 'seven,' as being the perfect number. Nothing is told us of the relation of these princes to the Messiah. Comp. Isai. xxxii. 1.

eight principal men] 'Eight,' as if to say, more than enough. In the hour of need God can raise up a superabundance of capable men. 'Principal men;' rather, **princes among men.**

6. *they shall waste*] Lit. 'feed off.'

the land of Nimrod] Comp. Gen. x. 11, 'Out of that land he [Nimrod] went forth into Assyria.' There is a special significance in the phrase, for a Hebrew could hardly help connecting Nimrod with *mārad*, 'to rebel.' Assyria was one of those 'disobedient' nations spoken of in *v.* 15.

in the entrances thereof] Lit., 'in the gates thereof.' Comp. Nah. iii. 13, 'The gates of thy land.'

And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many 7
people
As a dew from the LORD,
As the showers upon the grass, רְבִיבִים
That tarrieth not for man,
Nor waiteth for the sons of men.
And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles 8
in the midst of many people
As a lion among the beasts of the forest,
As a young lion among the flocks of sheep:
Who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth
in pieces,
And none can deliver.
Thine hand shall be lift up upon thine adversaries, 9
And all thine enemies shall be cut off.

10—15. *The destruction of warlike implements and of idolatry.*

And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, 10

7, 8. THE TWOFOLD OPERATION OF THE MESSIAH'S PEOPLE.—Israel is a precious and powerful instrument given by God to mankind. In a certain sense, he is a Messiah, because specially chosen to set an example of obedience to God's laws (Ex. xix. 5, 6), and to preach His religion to the Gentiles (iv. 2), and because the pious kernel of the nation is mystically united to Him who is preeminently *the* Messiah. Christ ('the Christ'), as we know from Luke ii. 34, was 'set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel,' and so too the people of Israel, regarded as a Messiah or Messianic agent, has a twofold influence on the neighbouring peoples, comparable on the one hand to the softly-falling, beneficent dew, and on the other to the fierce, destructive lion. (The same antithesis of figures occurs in Prov. xix. 12.)

7. *many people*] Rather, **many peoples.** See iv. 11, 13.

as the showers upon the grass] 'The grass withereth, the flower fadeth' (Isai. xl. 7) is the prophet's exclamation on the extinction of mighty empires. But there is no inherent necessity for the death of nations; Israel is the 'dew,' the fertilizing rain, of the nations, as the Church is elsewhere described as their 'salt' (Matt. v. 13).

that tarrieth not for man] Man can neither help nor hinder the works of God in nature; and the initial reluctance of the heathen shall be no bar to the blessed influence of Israel.

9. An exulting address to Israel marching forth against his enemies.

Thine hand shall be...] Rather, 'let thine hand be;' similarly in the next clause.

That I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee,
And I will destroy thy chariots:
11 And I will cut off the cities of thy land,
ה And throw down all thy strong holds:
12 And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; ו
And thou shalt have no *more* soothsayers:
13 Thy graven images also will I cut off,
And thy standing images out of the midst of thee;

10—15. THE DESTRUCTION OF WARLIKE IMPLEMENTS AND OF IDOLATRY.

10. *I will cut off thy horses...*] Isaiah, too, speaks of war-horses and war-chariots as equally hateful to God with idolatry, ii. 7. Horses were first imported from Egypt by the worldly-minded Solomon, 1 Kings iv. 26, x. 28, 29.

11. *the cities of thy land*] Large towns being centres of luxury and foreign fashions. The Book of Genesis traces the foundation of cities to the first murderer Cain, iv. 17.

all thy strong holds] Comp. Isai. ii. 15, xxx. 25, Hos. viii. 14.

12. *witchcrafts*] Sorcery was highly developed in Syria and Palestine; the ancient Semites brought it from their early home in Mesopotamia (see Lenormant's *Chaldean Magic*). Comp. Isai. ii. 6, Num. xxii.—xxiv., Deut. xviii. 10—13.

ו *soothsayers*] More precisely, **diviners of the clouds** (the clouds were much studied by the Chaldean diviners); or perhaps, **cloud-makers** (comp. the common name for sorcerers among savages, 'rain-makers').

13. *Thy graven images...thy standing images*] The former, images of wood or metal; the latter, stone pillars consecrated to a divinity. Comp. Lev. xxvi. 1, 'Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a (sacred) pillar,' Deut. xvi. 22, xxvii. 15, Ex. xxiii. 24. The denunciation of sacred 'pillars' and Ashérahs is however much more emphatic in the legislation of the Pentateuch than in Micah. The latter prophet mentions them rather as constituent parts of the corrupting civilisation imported from abroad. Isaiah (a contemporary of Micah's) actually gives his sanction to the erection of 'pillars' to the true God (xix. 19); and Hosea (also a contemporary) merely mentions the want of sacred 'pillars' as among the misfortunes of the captivity, concurrently with the want of king and sacrifice (Hos. iii. 4). This tolerant attitude of Isaiah and Micah is in perfect harmony with the Book of Genesis, which relates how Jacob set up and anointed the 'pillar' which marked out Bethel as a sanctuary. In fact, as long as 'high places,' or local sanctuaries, were tolerated, it was natural to tolerate 'pillars' with them, the 'pillar' being one of the traditional signs of a 'high place.' Isaiah lets the sanctuaries alone (though not, of course, the graven images, ii. 20, xxx. 22), and with them the sacred 'pillars;' Micah begins to protest against both, but still gently, compared with the legislation of the Pentateuch (comp. on i. 5).

And thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands.
And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee: 14
So will I destroy thy cities.
And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the 15
heathen,
Such as they have not heard.

CHAP. VI. 1—5. *The first part of a controversy between Jehovah and His people.*

Hear ye now what the LORD saith; 6
Arise, contend thou before the mountains,
And let the hills hear thy voice.
Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD's controversy, 2
And ye strong foundations of the earth:

14. *thy groves*] Rather, **thy Ashērahs.** Ashērah was a sensual Canaanitish goddess, corresponding to the feminine variety of the Assyrian Ishtar; her symbol was a wooden pillar or artificial tree.

thy cities] But the cities have been already mentioned (*v.* 11). It is better perhaps to render **thy adversaries** (giving the word its Aramaic sense; or, if this be preferred, slightly altering the first letter —'*ayin* into *çere*—to suit the general Hebrew usage). Thus we shall obtain a transition to *v.* 15.

15. *the heathen, such as they have not heard*] Rather, **the nations which have not been obedient.** Jehovah, being the God of the whole world, is *de jure* 'King of the nations' (Jer. x. 7); and if the 'nations' have enthroned other gods in His places, and have almost forgotten Jehovah's existence, they are still responsible to Him.

CHAP. VI.

This chapter, to which the first six verses of chap. vii. should form the conclusion, presents several striking points. Though quite as earnest against sin as chaps. i.—iii., it contains none of those vigorous detailed descriptions of particular transgressions, none of those earnest exhortations, which characterize the preceding chapters. It seems to have been written at a time when persecution had thinned the ranks of the pious worshippers of Jehovah, and we must evidently allow a considerable interval between its composition and that of chaps. i.—iii., and iv., v.

1—5. THE FIRST PART OF A CONTROVERSY BETWEEN JEHOVAH AND HIS PEOPLE.

1. *before the mountains*] The mountains have witnessed all Israel's past history, the favours conferred upon him, and his base return. Comp. Deut. xxxii. 1, Isai. i. 2.

2. *ye strong foundations*] 'Strong' should rather be **enduring.**

For the LORD hath a controversy with his people,
And he will plead with Israel.
3 O my people, what have I done unto thee?
And wherein have I wearied thee?
Testify against me.
4 For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt,
And redeemed thee out of the house of servants;
And I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.
5 O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted,
And what Balaam the son of Beor answered him;
From Shittim unto Gilgal;

The hills have outlived generation after generation of rebellious Israelites.

with his people] The phrase is very significant in this connexion; if anything could awaken Israel's conscience, it would be the thought of the special mercies of which he had been the recipient.

3. *O my people*] Jehovah opens the controversy. He assumes, what is too patent for denial, that Israel has fallen away from his God.

wherein have I wearied thee] The requirements of God's service were not wearisome (as *vv.* 6, 7 will show). As long as justice, mercy, and humility are present, Jehovah asks no more. A splendid ceremonial is the luxury of worship, not a necessity.

4. *For I brought thee up*] 'Nothing,' is the only truthful answer to the divine question. Jehovah has indeed wonderfully assisted His people in their troubles. Nothing could extinguish the sense of the overwhelming grandeur of Israel's first deliverance. A prophet, writing in the name of the Jewish Church of the Captivity, points back to the happy days of old, when he 'brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock' (Isai. lxiii. 11).

I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam] These were the shepherds, by whom 'God led His people like sheep' (Ps. lxxvii. 20)—Eastern shepherds going before their sheep (John x. 4).

5. *O my people, remember now...*] The prophet, in the name of Jehovah, reminds his people of another great mercy, the bringing to nought of Balak's plan to destroy Israel.

consulted] i.e. with the elders of Midian (Num. xxii. 4).

from Shittim unto Gilgal] Shittim was the last station of the Israelites on the other side of Jordan; Gilgal the first in the land of Canaan. It is not clear how these words are to be connected grammatically with what precedes. The sense (see Targ.) is, 'Remember that which happened between Shittim and Gilgal,' i.e. not only the episode of Balak and Balaam, but the wonderful passage of the Jordan and the entrance into the promised land. Probably, some words have dropped out before this clause.

That *ye* may know the righteousness of the LORD.
Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, 6
And bow myself before the high God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
With calves of a year old?
Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, 7
Or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression,
The fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul?

the righteousness] Rather, **the righteous acts**; lit. 'the righteousnesses' (so Judg. v. 11, 1 Sam. xii. 7).

6, 7. The people, feeling its need of atonement, anxiously (note the repeated questions) inquires of the prophet how it is to propitiate Jehovah. Bishop Butler (Sermon on Balaam), Maurice, Newman, and Stanley, hold that *vv.* 6, 7 represent the question of Balak, and *v.* 8 the answer of Balaam. This was probably suggested by 2 Kings iii. 27, where it is recorded that the king of Moab offered up his eldest son as a burnt-offering. But the inference is hasty; human sacrifices were one of the abominations of Israel (see below), which most excited the reprobation of the prophets. Bishop Butler, too, had probably not realized the amount of personification which exists in the prophetic writings. It is the people personified which speaks in these two verses (6 and 7). Comp. opening of chap. vii.

6. *Wherewith*] i.e. with what present?

bow myself] With the obeisance of a subject before his king, or of a poor man before a rich.

with calves of a year old] These were considered the choicest (Lev. ix. 3).

7. *with thousands of rams*] With hecatombs, a Greek would have said. The calves are estimated by quality; the rams, by quantity.

rivers of oil] Or, 'torrents of oil;' like 'brooks [torrents] of honey,' Job xx. 17.

my firstborn for my transgression] This is the climax of Israel's offers; he will not withhold his most precious possession. The valley of Hinnom was for centuries defiled by sacrifices of children to the 'devouring' Fire-god, Moloch; a custom derived from 'the nations whom Jehovah cast out from before the children of Israel' (2 Kings xvi. 3). The narrative of the substitution of the ram for Isaac (Gen. xxii. 13), and the law of the redemption of the firstborn of man (Exod. xiii. 13), show that, although perhaps permitted 'for the hardness of men's hearts' in earlier times, such human sacrifices were no longer admitted by the prophetic and legal interpreters of the Divine will to Israel. Comp. Lev. xviii. 21, xx. 2, 2 Kings xvi. 3, xxiii. 10, Isai. lvii. 5, Jer. vii. 31, Ezek. xvi. 20, xx. 26

8. The prophet denies that any external forms will make up for the want of spiritual qualities. The sacrifice of the heart is what God

8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what *is* good;
And what doth the LORD require of thee,
But to do justly, and to love mercy,
And to walk humbly with thy God?

9—16. *Jehovah's indignant Denunciation.*

9 The LORD's voice crieth unto the city,
And *the man of* wisdom shall see thy name:
Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.
10 Are there yet the treasures of wickedness *in* the house of the wicked,

demands; but "man convinced of sin is ready to sacrifice what is dearest to him rather than give up his own will and give himself to God" (W. Robertson Smith). The passage reminds us of Isai. i. 10—15, Hos. vi. 6. Evidently Hezekiah's reformation had been purely external (comp. Isai. xxix. 13).

He hath shewed thee] viz. in the Law, especially in Deuteronomy.

what doth the Lord require of thee...] Comp. Deut. x. 12, 'And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul?'

to do justly...] The opposite of Israel's present characteristics (comp. *v.* 10, ii. 1, 2, iii. 2, 3, 9, 10).

to walk humbly with thy God] Humility is the primary religious virtue in the Old Testament (comp. Isai. ii. 12).

9—16. JEHOVAH'S INDIGNANT DENUNCIATION.

9. *The Lord's voice*] Because before this it was the prophet who spoke.

unto the city] i.e. Jerusalem.

the man of wisdom shall see thy name] A very dubious translation. Others render, 'well advised is he that seeth (or, feareth) thy name' (Driver); or, 'wisdom is it to fear thy name,' which is supported to some extent by the ancient versions ('fear' for 'see' has this important sanction). This requires no alteration of the text (i.e. the consonants), but merely of one of the vowel-points. Caspari's version of the received reading, 'Thy name hath wisdom for its object,' is unnatural.

hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it] i.e. hear ye the prophecy of punishment, and hear him who hath ordained the judgment. It is the Assyrian invasion which is referred to; comp. Isai. x. 5, 24.

10. The denunciation is couched in the form of questions, to prick the conscience of the guilty ones.

Are there yet the treasures...] i.e. Does the oppressor go on heaping up unjustly acquired spoil.

And the scant measure *that is* abominable?
Shall I count *them* pure with the wicked balances, 11
And with the bag of deceitful weights?
For the rich *men* thereof are full *of* violence, 12
And the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies,
And their tongue *is* deceitful in their mouth.
Therefore also will I make *thee* sick in smiting thee, 13
In making *thee* desolate because of thy sins.
Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; 14
And thy casting down *shall be* in the midst of thee;
And thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver;

the scant measure] A particular measure is referred to, viz. the ephah (about three pecks, dry measure). The sin specified reminds us forcibly of Deuteronomy, where it is forbidden to have in one's house 'divers ephahs, a great and a small,' and 'a perfect and right ephah' is prescribed (Deut. xxiv. 14, 15). Amos, too, Micah's senior, speaks of those who longed for the expiration of the sabbath, 'that they might set forth wheat, making the ephah small' (Amos viii. 5).

11. *Shall I count them pure...*] This rendering is barely defensible, even if we alter the vowel-points. It was dictated by the very natural feeling that the speaker ought to be the same person as in *v.* 10. Keil thinks that the reading of the Hebrew text may be justified, if we suppose the speaker to be the prophet speaking as the representative of the human conscience. The text-reading is, **Can I be pure**, &c., which, according to this commentator, means 'Can a man be pure?' It is simpler, however, and in accordance with what we know of the confusions of Hebrew pronunciation, to follow the Septuagint, the Peshito, and the Targum, and restore the third person instead of the first; unless, looking at *v.* 12, we prefer to read the verb in the second person, 'Canst thou (O Jerusalem) be pure.' For the prophet continues, 'The rich men *thereof*' (i.e. of Jerusalem).

13. *will I make thee sick*] **Deadly sick** is the meaning; comp. Nah. iii. 19, where the term is explained in the parallel clause to mean 'incurable.'

14, 15. *Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied*] The description in these two verses again reminds us of Deuteronomy, and of that portion of Leviticus which most recalls Deuteronomy (see Deut. xxviii. 39, and Lev. xxvi. 25, 26).

thy casting down] The meaning of the Hebrew is very uncertain. **Thy emptiness** is the rendering which has the best support of recent authorities; if we adopt it, we must substitute 'remain' for 'be'—it is emptiness of the stomach which is meant. But the rendering is precarious, and the text, as so often, is probably corrupt. We might restore, 'thy leanness shall be in the midst of thee' (i.e. of the people).

thou shalt take hold] Rather, **thou shalt remove (thy goods)**. The prospect held out is that the enemy will fall so suddenly upon the Jews,

And *that* which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword.
15 Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap;
Thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint
thee with oil;
And sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine
16 For the statutes of Omri are kept,
And all the works of the house of Ahab,
And ye walk in their counsels;
That I should make thee a desolation,
And the inhabitants thereof a hissing:
Therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

that they will not be able to remove their property or family to a place of security; or if they should, by a rare good fortune, succeed in saving a little, it should soon become the prey of the foe (comp. Isai. xxiii. 12, Jer. xliv. 12).

15. *tread the olives*] It is now the custom only to press the olives; in olden times, they must have been trodden as well (like grapes). Ancient oil-presses are still found in Palestine. The olives were ground to a pulp sometimes by treading, sometimes by a stone-wheel. (Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, p. 207.)

16. *the statutes of Omri*] 'Statutes' is here used in a religious sense = ceremonies or rules of worship (as Jer. x. 3, Lev. xx. 7, 2 Kings xvii. 34). Omri is said to have 'done worse than all [the kings] that were before him.' Little more is recorded of him in 1 Kings, but the Assyrians always associated his name with that of his kingdom: the northern realm has for its Assyrian name *Bit Khumri* 'place of Omri.' 'The statutes of Omri' and 'the works of the house of Ahab' (Omri's son) are of course the worship of Baal (comp. 1 Kings xvi. 31, 32). 'The separation of the kingdoms had not broken the subtle links that connected Judah with the greater Israel of the north' (Prof. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 345). Hence the low religious state of the kingdom of Israel reacted most injuriously on the kingdom of Judah.

in their counsels] i.e. in those of Omri and Ahab. It is singular that these two should be the only kings of N. Israel mentioned in the prophetical books.

the reproach of my people] i.e. the reproach which attaches to the people of Jehovah when it is cast out of 'Jehovah's land' (Hos. ix. 3). Most probably, however, we should read, 'the reproach of the peoples' (comp. Ezek. xxxiv. 29, xxxvi. 6). The final *m* may have dropped out, or the sign of abbreviation may have been overlooked.

This latter part of the verse assumes a different form in the versions. Upon what text they are based is uncertain; but they all agree in rendering "fearers of (his) name" (the pronoun is omitted in Targ.), and (except Targ.) 'tribe' for 'rod.' Hence Ewald renders, 'Hear, O tribe, and thou who summonest it.' The Septuagint also changes the

Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, 7
As the grapegleanings of the vintage: [illegible] Minlez
There is no cluster to eat:
My soul desired the firstripe fruit.
The good *man* is perished out of the earth: 2
And *there is* none upright among men:
They all lie in wait for blood;
They hunt every man his brother *with* a net.
That *they* may do evil with both hands earnestly, 3

'yet' of *v.* 10 into 'city,' and connects it with *v.* 9. Following up these traces of what he conceives to be the original reading, Roorda restores, 'And they that fear his name have heard wisdom. He hath declared who is he that stirreth up his rod.'

Chap. VII.

Vv. **1—6.** These verses should be read in connexion with Chap. vi.

1. *Woe is me...*] The speaker in *vv.* 1—4, or at any rate in *v.* 1, is not the prophet, but the true Israel, i.e. Israel within Israel, personified. He is like a garden at the time of the fruit-harvest, which has many delightful fruits, but of course no early figs; or, like a vineyard, after the grape-gathering. This the prophet expresses by saying that Israel is become like the gatherings of the fruit-harvest, which in point of fact amount to nothing at all. Did our Lord think of this when he found no early figs? See Mark xi. 13.

my soul desired...] Rather, 'no early fig which my soul desireth.'

2. *The good man*] More fully rendered, 'The pious man,' he who makes love his rule of action—love to God and love to man. 'The idea of *khāsīdh* is not passive [he who experiences grace or love], for God Himself is called *khāsīdh*, Ps. cxlv. 17, but he who exercises *khesedh* (Prov. xi. 17), i.e. makes men, according to God's will, and God Himself (comp. Jon. ii. 8, Prov. cxliv. 2) 'the object of his loving endeavours' (Delitzsch on Ps. xvi. 10). Observe, 'The pious man,' not 'pious men' is the phrase employed, 'indicating the fewness and isolation of these Abdiels.' There is a striking parallel to the first half of this verse in Isai. lvii. 1, 'The righteous perisheth, and no man taketh it to heart, and men of piety are gathered,' &c. Both passages must have been written in time of persecution.

they all lie in wait for blood] Not merely persecution, but anarchy seems to have been the order of the day: at least the rich and powerful were under no legal restraint; they did that which was right in their own eyes. Similar circumstances are described in many of the Psalms (see e.g. Ps. x. 8, 9).

every man his brother] Although, as children of Abraham, they ought to love each other; comp. Lev. xix. 18.

3. *That they may do evil...*] This verse and the first half of the following verse are extremely obscure, and it is most improbable that

The prince asketh, and the judge *asketh* for a reward;
And the great *man*, he uttereth his mischievous desire:
So they wrap it up.
4 The best of them *is* as a brier:
The *most* upright *is sharper* than a thorn hedge:
The day of thy watchmen *and* thy visitation cometh;
Now shall be their perplexity.
5 Trust ye not in a friend,
Put ye not confidence in a guide:

the text as it stands is correct. In any case, the A.V. rendering of the first clause cannot be maintained; a better one is, '(Their) hands are (only) for evil, to do (it) skilfully.'

the prince asketh] 'Asketh' the judge to shut his eyes to some act of violence, or to put some righteous man out of the way.

the judge asketh] Rather, 'the judge doeth it,' or 'agreeth to his demand;' but the ellipsis is harsh, and the probability is that there is some corruption of the text, or that the letters are wrongly grouped in the Massoretic text.

so they wrap it up] Rather, 'and they weave it together.' It requires 'weaving' to carry an evil desire into effect, for, bad as the times are, it is needful to keep up the forms of justice. Thus, when Ahab wished to get rid of Naboth, it was necessary to persuade the people that his victim had 'renounced God and the king' (1 Kings xxi. 13). Grätz corrects, 'so they prevent it' (viz. justice).

4. *The best of them is as a brier*] Comp. 2 Sam. xxiii. 6 'and good-for-nothing men are all of them as thorns thrust away.' 'Thorns' are in the Bible symbols of sin and its effects, and of the temptations which beset man's path. But the Hebrew text has not the appearance of being sound.

the day of thy watchmen] i.e. the day foreseen by thy prophets. A prophet is stationed to look out for the approach of the 'day of Jehovah;' comp. Isai. xxi. 6 (where the same form is used in the Hebrew as here), Jer. vi. 17 (a different form).

thy visitation] i.e. thy punishment.

now shall be their perplexity] 'Now,' i.e. when this day has come. Wild confusion shall prevail, even among the faithful servants of Jehovah, when the long-predicted 'day of Jehovah' shall dawn. For the first result to the faithful Israel will be, not happiness, but misery—the chastisement due to past sins. The change of persons from the second to the third is harsh, but not unexampled.

5, 6. Here the prophet addresses the better disposed of his people. Friendship and wedded love can no longer be trusted; natural affection passes into its opposite. Comp. Matt. x. 21, 35, 36 (a reminiscence of a clause in our passage), Luke xii. 53, xxi. 16.

5. *guide*] Rather, **familiar friend.** The same mistake occurs in A.V. of Ps. lv. 13 (14 in the Hebrew).

Keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy
bosom.
For the son dishonoureth the father, 6
The daughter riseth up against her mother,
The daughter in law against her mother in law;
A man's enemies *are* the men of his own house.
Therefore I will look unto the LORD; 7
I will wait for the God of my salvation:
My God will hear me.
Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: 8
When I fall, I shall arise;
When I sit in darkness, the LORD *shall be* a light unto me.
I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have 9
sinned against him,

6. *dishonoureth*] Lit. 'treateth as a fool.' The same verb in the same form occurs in Deut. xxxii. 6. It is unsafe however to argue that Deuteronomy must have been already written in the time of Micah, for we also find the word in Jer. xiv. 21, Nah. iii. 6.

Vv. **7—20.** At *v.* 6 the thread of thought is broken; the following verses appear to have been attached later. The speaker is, indeed, still the true Israel; but here she appears already overpowered by her enemies, whereas in *vv.* 1—6 the day of chastisement was still far off. Here, accordingly, consolation is the chief object of the prophetic writer; in the earlier passage, he had to warn his people of the still future calamity. In its tone this section reminds us of the Book of Israel's Consolation which follows on chap. xxxvii. of the Book of Isaiah.

7. *Therefore I*] Rather, **And as for me, I.**

the God of my salvation] A reminiscence of the Psalter (Ps. xxvii. 9).

will hear me] 'Hearing' includes answering (Isai. xxx. 19).

8. *O mine enemy*] i.e. the instrument of God's 'visitation,' the heathen oppressor of Israel.

when I fall] Rather, **for (if) I have fallen.** The 'falling' is of course not that of sin, but of calamity, which is often represented as a stumbling-block.

when I sit in darkness] Another figure for trouble; comp. Isai. lx. 1, ix. 2.

the Lord shall be a light] Again an image from the Psalter; comp. Ps. xxvii. 1.

9. *I will bear the indignation...*] The speaker is sure that Jehovah is still his God; consequently in wrath He will still remember mercy, and will, in His own good time, remove the rod.

I have sinned against him] The pious portion of Israel is included in the confession, as in Isai. lxiv. 5.

Until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me:
He will bring me forth to the light, *and* I shall behold his righteousness.
10 Then she *that is* mine enemy shall see *it*, and shame shall cover her
Which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God?
Mine eyes shall behold her:
Now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.
11 *In* the day that thy walls are *to be* built,
In that day shall the decree be far removed.
12 *In* that day *also* he shall come even to thee
From Assyria, and *from* the fortified cities,
And from the fortress even to the river,
And from sea *to* sea, and *from* mountain *to* mountain.

my cause] i.e. Israel's quarrel with the oppressor.

his righteousness] i.e. His interposition for my deliverance. When God has once entered into a covenant, it is only 'righteous' for Him to protect those who are in relations with Him. This conception of the Divine righteousness is important; as another equally Biblical conception (the forensic) has become almost too prominent. So St John says (1st Ep. i. 9) that God is 'faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins.'

11. Here the soliloquy of believing and repentant Israel ceases, and a prophetic announcement begins.

In the day that thy walls] Rather, **There cometh a day to build thy walls.** The image is that of a vineyard, the walls of which have been thrown down (as Isai. v. 5). The word rendered 'walls' is different from that which means the wall of a city.

shall the decree be far removed] But what decree? Rather, **shall the bound be afar off**, i.e. the boundaries of the land of Israel shall be widely extended. Comp. Isai. xxxiii. 17 'thine eyes shall behold a land of distances' (=a widely extended territory).

12. Comp. the extent of the dispersion as described in Isai. xi. 11.

He shall come even to thee] Rather, **men shall come to thee**, or, perhaps, 'to thy cities' (comp. Sept.). A promise of the return of the Jewish exiles.

and from the fortified cities] Rather, **and from the cities of Egypt.** 'Egypt' is here not Mizraim, but Māzōr, an abnormal form, which occurs again in Isai. xix. 6, xxxvii. 25. It is not an Egyptian word, but the Assyrians gave almost the same name to Egypt (Muçur). The phrase, 'the cities of Egypt,' reminds us how thickly peopled the Nile-valley was.

and from the fortress] Rather, **and from Egypt.**

even to the river] i.e. the Euphrates.

from sea to sea] i.e. from the Mediterranean Sea in the West to the Persian Gulf in the East (Joel ii. 20).

from mountain to mountain] i.e. from Sinai in the south to Lebanon

Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, 13
For the fruit of their doings.
Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, 14
Which dwell solitarily *in* the wood, in the midst of Carmel:
Let them feed *in* Bashan and Gilead, as *in* the days of old.
According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt 15
Will I shew unto him marvellous *things*.

in the North. The Peshito (Syriac) however reads this clause, 'even to the sea on the west and to mount Hor.'

13. *the land*] i.e. the land of Canaan. Before the great promises of a golden future can be realized, judgment must have its perfect work. We might, however, render 'the earth,' i.e. the earth with the exception of Canaan. The desolation of the earth would help to explain the thronging of the people to Palestine foretold in the preceding verse.

14—17. Here an abrupt transition occurs. The prophet, in the name of the people, supplicates for the fulfilment of the promise of salvation.

14. *the flock of thine heritage*] Comp. Ps. xxviii. 9 'bless thine inheritance; feed them also;' Ps. xcv. 7, 'we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.'

which dwell solitarily] The special mission of Israel (which was to be 'holy,' i.e. set apart, 'unto Jehovah') rendered seclusion from the world a matter of primary importance. Comp. Num. xxiii. 9, 'Lo, the people dwelleth alone [or, solitarily] and is not reckoned among the nations, Deut. xxxiii. 28, 'So Israel dwelleth...alone.'

in the wood, in the midst of Carmel] These words ought rather to have been attached to the following verb, so that 'in the wood,' &c. should be parallel to 'in Bashan and Gilead.' The 'deep jungles of copse' in the 'rocky dells' of Carmel form, by their luxuriance, a contrast to the bare hills and vales of the land of Judah. Comp. Isai. xxxiii. 9, xxxv. 2.

in Bashan and Gilead] The pastures of Bashan were as famous as its woods; in poetic language, the 'fat bulls of Bashan' became a symbol for the proud, unfeeling aristocracy of Israel (Ps. xxii. 12, Amos iv. 1). Gilead too was famous for its cattle (Num. xxxii. 1, 1 Chron. v. 9). Parallel passage, Jer. l. 19.

as in the days of old] i.e. probably in the days of David—the ideal period of Israel's history (see on v. 2).

15. The divine answer to the prayer of the church. It carries us back to a still earlier time than David's—the time of the redemption of Israel from the house of bondage. Others read 'shew thou' for 'will I shew.' Or read, 'Do thou shew unto us.'

unto him] viz. unto the people; see *v.* 14.

marvellous things] The word used in Ex. iii. 20 of the 'plagues of

16 The nations shall see and be confounded at all their
might:
They shall lay *their* hand upon *their* mouth, and their
ears shall be deaf.
17 They shall lick the dust like a serpent,
They shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth:
They shall be afraid of the LORD our God,
And shall fear because of thee.
18 Who *is* a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity,
And passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his
heritage?
He retaineth not his anger for ever,
Because he delighteth in mercy.
19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us;
He will subdue our iniquities;
And thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

Egypt.' It conveys the idea of the supernatural. The deliverance of poor oppressed Israel, from the grip of a mighty world-empire is no less exceptional than the dividing of the sea.

16. *confounded at all their might*] Ashamed because all their might has come to nothing.

lay their hand upon their mouth] A mark of reverence; comp. Job xxi. 5, Isai. lii. 15.

17. *they shall move out of their holes*] Rather, 'they shall come trembling out of their fastnesses' (same word as in Ps. xviii. 46, where A.V. 'close places').

like worms] Lit., 'like creepers' (or rather, trailers). The same term occurs in Deut. xxxii. 24.

they shall be afraid of] Rather, 'they shall turn with shuddering towards.'

18—20. A lyric passage, concluding the whole book. The prophet revels in the thought of the Divine goodness. Comp. Isai. xii. 1—6, and still more Ex. xv. 1—18 (especially *v.* 11). The form of *v.* 18 naturally reminds us of the name of Micah ('Who is like Jehovah?'). The prophet does not mean that other gods have a real existence, but speaks from the point of view of the other nations who believe that they do really exist. The divine attributes spoken of are those which had an increasing fascination for the Jews, the deeper their sense became of their national sins. Comp. Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7, Joel ii. 13, Ps. ciii. 8, 9, cxxx. 7, Isai. xliii. 25, liv. 8, lv. 7, Ps. cv. 8, 10.

subdue our iniquities] Sins are personified as enemies, as in Gen. iv. 7, Ps. lxv. 3.

thou wilt cast all their sins] Perhaps an allusion to the fate of Pharaoh (comp. Ex. xv. 5, 10).

Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, *and* the mercy to 20
Abraham,
Which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days
of old.

20. *Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob...*] For the saints of old still 'live unto God' (i.e. in the sight of God they are alive), and still take an interest in the affairs of their successors; comp. Jer. xxxi. 15, Luke xvi. 25—31, John viii. 56, Rev. vi. 9—11. This was not only a popular belief at the Christian era (comp. Matt. xxvii. 47, 49), but is endorsed by our Lord and by the New Testament writers. 'Truth' here means 'faithfulness;' the promises alluded to are such as Gen. xxii. 16—18, xxviii. 13, 14.

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